



The Educating Parent

Why do parents opt out of school,
the traditional educational choice for their children?

Research consistently demonstrates the following:

A strong sense of responsibility for parenting, and this includes education;

Often parents feel family values are in conflict with the school environment;

*A belief home education leads to an enhanced social development,
with the absence of competition, peer pressure and age segregation;*

The opportunity for true individualised learning programs;

The ability to build stronger and closer family relationships;

Parents enjoy being part of the child's learning process and don't want to miss out;

a belief that they can provide a better quality education;

Desire to follow particular philosophies or curriculums (not necessarily religious)

The vast majority of homeschooling families
believe that the education of children is
primarily the responsibility and the right of parents.

Home educating parents are highly motivated individuals
who are keenly interested in the education of their children.

Home education is not a new phenomenon, neither is it radical. All types of people and families engage in educating their children at home, for all sorts of reasons. The pluralistic nature of home educating families reflects the pluralistic nature of mainstream Australian society.

This is further reflected in the many different approaches to education at home adopted by these families. No one way is right, or necessarily better than any other. The diversity of educational approaches and values is shared among the many home educating families via conferences, newsletters, camps, journals and support networks. These are seen as vital to informing home educating families of resources and options available, as well as current research developments and results.

As home education grows as a movement in Australia more local research will be done, giving a clearer picture of the advantages:

<http://theeducatingparent.com/articles/AustralianResearchSummary2012.pdf>

Reasons for choosing home education....

Since the 1970's home education has grown as a popular movement, and like all such phenomena, has attracted research in an attempt to understand the reasons why families turn their back on institutionalised education, and also what long term effects may occur for those families, and the overall implications for society as a whole.

Drawing from several studies the following reasons for parents choosing home education emerge (not listed in any order or priority):

- a marked lack of confidence in state related institutions, with a tendency toward conservative view points
- lack of direct influence in setting school agendas and determining curriculum
- opposition to the ideological content of school programs and/or methodology used
- conflicting value orientations of home and schools
- individualised attention for children with special needs (gifted and talented and specific learning problems)
- focus on perceived gains in social development from home education, with a strong focus on family unity and relationships
- concern with declining academic standards
- perceived lack of availability of educational programs to suit individual children's learning needs, styles, rates and interests
- avoidance of negative peer influences and damaging socialisation experiences
- perceived lack of attention in schools to holistic development of children, including spiritual
- strong parental sense of primary responsibility for children's education, with a need to have access to, and some control over, their children's educational experiences as a strong motivational factor.
- offers solutions to present or potential educational problems, sometimes as a result of deterioration of communications and hostile relationships between families and schools
- parents' own educational experiences, or memories of unhappy or unsuccessful personal experiences of schooling
- high cost of alternative and/or private (including correspondence) education
- lack of availability of choice of schools in local area
- opposition to the competitive nature of schooling, including grading and testing
- perceived gains in autonomous home learning programs, independent study skills and higher student motivation
- the development in parents of a stronger sense of satisfaction with their own lives through directing their children's education
- home education offers a natural learning and socialising environment as opposed to the contrived and artificial environments and learning programs of schools

No doubt there are many more reasons as each family has a unique set of circumstances leading to the decision to home educate. Most families' reasons change over time as the benefits of home education become more apparent.

Characteristics of home educating

The following list of characteristics are drawn from research seeking to find a descriptive profile of parents and children engaged in learning at home, in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of home education.

- the practice of home education follows closely from the reasons for choosing it and from lifestyle choices
- parents are highly interested in children's personal, social and spiritual development
- both parents are actively involved in home educating their children with the mother as the 'teacher' most of the time
- most, though not all, parents have attended or graduated from tertiary education
- learning programs tend to move from formal structured activities to generally more informal, spontaneously generated learning activities with time and experience
- learning programs tend to be flexible and highly individualised with use of home made and purchased curriculum materials
- home educated students study a wide range of subjects, including conventional school ones
- many families are also interested and involved in home birth, breast feeding, and healthy lifestyle choices
- a variety of religious beliefs are represented among home educating families

Outcomes

Many of the outcomes of home education are unintended ones, and are recognised as welcome bonuses. These include:

- closer family relationships, with children playing a more positive and significant role in family life, and an emphasis on family making skills
- parental personal fulfillment and increased learning opportunities for parents as well as children
- greater understanding of personal responsibility
- natural fostering of co-operative and team behaviours
- an empowering process for both parents and children
- greater freedom from arbitrary time limits such as terms and year levels to pursue educational activities and interests

In addition, clear educational advantage has been cited in research as outcomes of home learning environments, and include:

- increased opportunity for one to one interaction with more skilled peers or parents leads to cognitive challenges and gains
- children are able to ask more questions, with more time allowed for answers to be found, leading to increased motivation for learning
- children and parents engage in more complex language in the home learning environment compared with classroom settings, and this improves the intellectual and language development of children
- children have been consistently shown to rate equal to or higher than average on standardised achievement tests in the USA
- home educated children's self concept has been shown to be significantly higher than schooled children, indicating that home education does not socially deprive children but produces socially well adjusted young people
- children are less peer oriented
- increased involvement in community activities
- greater attainment of independent learning skills, self-motivation and organisational abilities.

Information in this leaflet came from the following sources:

Getting Started With Home Based Learning - Practical Considerations for Parents of School Aged Children, B Paine (self published)

'The Home Education Phenomenon', R Hunter, Griffith University, Qld

'Parents Rationales for Operating Home Schools', J Gary Knowles, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol 20, No 2

'Homeschools: A Synthesis of Research on Characteristics and learner outcomes', B Ray, *Education and Urban Society*, Vol 21, No 1

'Home Education and the family', J Peacock, *Naturally Learning*, Vol 4&5

'Home based education effectiveness research and implications', R Meighan, *Education Review*, Vol47, No3

For more information visit:

The Educating Parent and Always Learning Books

<http://theeducatingparent.com> and

<http://alwayslearningbooks.com>

Since 1989 Beverley Paine has steadfastly promoted and supported home education as an educational choice for Australia families. Her [books](#) and websites aim to demystify education, gently deschooling families so that they may meet their children's individual and unique educational and developmental needs. Her honesty, insights and wealth of experience continues to bring hope, reassurance and confidence to families.