HSLDA

Making homeschooling possible

You can homeschool!

teach your own child

Introduction

home•school•ing (hōm ′skōō′ling), *n.*, the practice of teaching one's own children at home. [1985–90]

Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary © 2001

DID YOU KNOW?
The Department of Education estimates that in 2012, 1.8 million children were being homeschooled in the United States.

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As long as there have been parents and children, "homeschooling" has been happening. It was only with the emergence of widespread compulsory public education that this age-old method of instruction was virtually forgotten, but not eradicated.*

Foreign service workers and missionaries who by choice or necessity did not send their children to boarding schools continued the tradition of home education. Children who had illnesses that kept them from attending school were frequently taught at home. And families who lived in the remote areas of Alaska or other isolated regions answered their children's educational needs with homeschooling.

In the 1970s and '80s, homeschooling experienced a renaissance as a few parents began to question whether the public education system or existing private schools were right for their individual children. They wondered if they might be able to do a better job.

And what do you know? Parents discovered they could do a great job. They told two friends who told two friends and so on. The modern homeschooling movement was born.

It wasn't entirely that simple, of course. The early days were rocky.

There were few curriculum suppliers who would sell to homeschoolers. Teachers considered themselves experts. What made these parents think they could teach their own children?

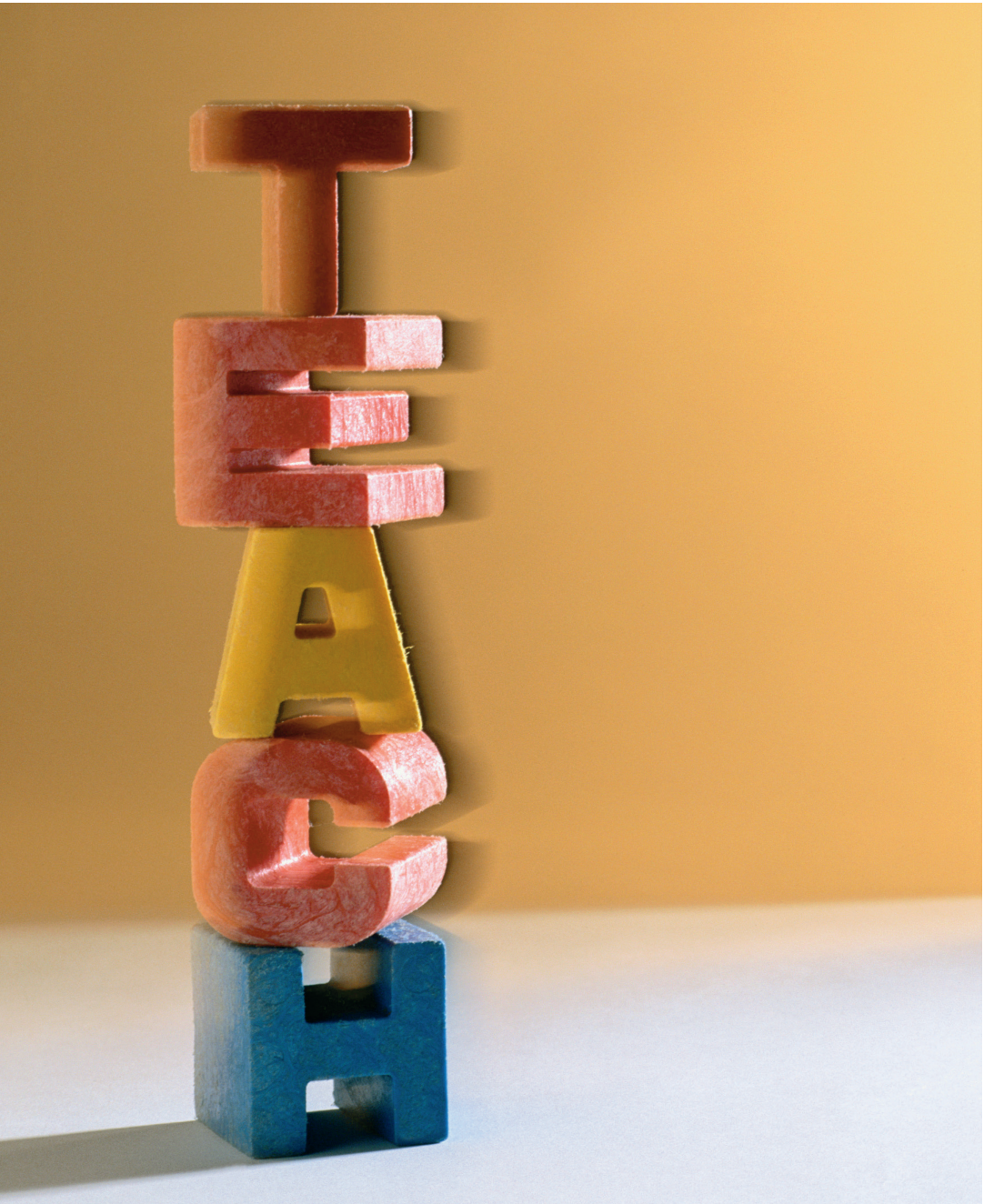
While few states specifically prohibited homeschooling, legislators and school officials acted as if they had. Homeschooling parents faced threats of jail time and having their children removed from their homes. Some parents were arrested. Many were taken to court.

Parents were confronted by concerned neighbors, worried friends, and aghast relatives—all of whom were sure that the homeschooling moms and dads were ruining their children's lives and dooming them to an unproductive future of illiteracy and isolation.

But those early homeschoolers hung tough. They fought the court battles. They went to the library and crafted their own curricula. And they quietly continued teaching, letting their children's achievement answer the charges of their fiercest critics.

* Massachusetts passed the first compulsory attendance law in 1852; by 1918 all states had enacted similar legislation.

The BIG questions



Is it legal?

"Because the United States Constitution is the highest law of the land, homeschooling has always been legal in all 50 states," says Michael Farris, HSLDA founder and chairman.

"It has been a bit of a fight to get the various members of the education and social services establishment to accept that fact, but great progress has been made. Currently about three-fourths of the states have specific laws authorizing and regulating homeschooling. In the balance of the states, homeschoolers may legally operate as a small private school or provide 'equivalent instruction.' The details vary considerably from state to state and opinions about the law vary from district to district. What does not vary is HSLDA's commitment to the constitutional right to teach one's children at home." For a summary of your state's homeschool law or regulation, go to *hslda.org/mystate*.

But I don't have a teaching degree. Can I really teach my child?

Yes! Research and practical experience show that it is dedication and hard work, not special training, that produce outstanding educational results in a homeschool setting. (See Figure 1 on next page.)

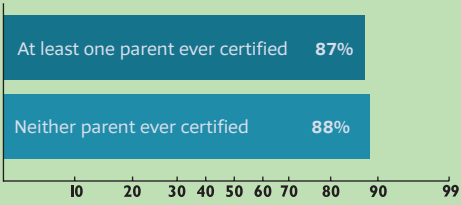
CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE

Three factors motivated us to begin homeschooling. First, we wanted to provide our children with the best education possible out of the options available to us. Second, we wanted flexibility with respect to our family's schedule. As a pastor, Mike works a lot of nights and weekends, and we wanted to be able to have "family time" whenever Mike was available. Finally, we wanted to be the primary influence in the lives of our children.

At first, we wondered if we would be able to provide our children with a high-quality education, if our children would become isolated and socially awkward, and if the workload would be overwhelming for Karen. It has proven to be a lot of hard work, but it has been worth it! We use an excellent curriculum that gives our kids the education we wanted for them, and we've found some very good means of social interaction through homeschooling groups and community sports leagues. In short, homeschooling has been a blessing for our family, and our children are thriving. While we can't predict what the future will hold, our plan is to continue homeschooling!

—Mike and Karen McKinley

FIG. 1: HOMESCHOOL PERCENTILE RANKINGS (GRADES K–12) BASED ON PARENTS' TEACHER CERTIFICATION



National percentile, achievement test core (combination of reading, language, and math)
HSLDA & Ray, 2009

Where do I find curriculum and materials?

There's an ever-increasing variety of curriculum—from traditional textbooks to homeschool-specific curriculum and correspondence courses. Thankfully, experienced homeschool moms have put together review guides, saving newcomers time and frustration. Just two such guides are *Mary Pride's Complete Guide to Getting Started in Homeschooling* and Cathy Duffy's *102 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum*.

Start by contacting homeschooling veterans in your local and/or state support group—ask what they have tried, what has or has not worked for them, and why. Get to know your child's learning style. (See the "Useful Tips" section in this booklet.) Attend a couple of homeschool seminars and curriculum fairs where you can look at your options firsthand. To find a support group or state homeschool convention near you, visit *hslda.org/mystate*.

How much time does it take?

A lot less than you think. Homeschooled students don't have to take time to change classes or travel to and from a school, so they can proceed at their own pace. In the elementary years especially, parents and children may find that they need only a few hours a day to accomplish their school work.

What if I have several children at different grade levels?

You'll be surprised at the subjects that can span grade levels. Certain curricula lend themselves to multilevel teaching. You can design your program so that older children work independently in the morning while you work individually with younger children, and then while younger children take afternoon naps, you can have one-on-one time with older students. For multi-level teaching ideas and resources, visit *hslda.org/toddlerstotweens*.

What about my child's special needs?

Thousands of families are homeschooling children whose special needs range from attention deficit disorder to severe multiple handicaps. Parents often find that when they bring these children home to be educated, they come out of the "deep freeze" that has kept them from making significant progress. Gone are the comparisons, labels, social pressures, and distractions that a regular classroom may bring. Parents can offer their children individualized education, flexibility, and encouragement, which may be ideal for children who are learning disabled, medically sensitive, or have other challenges. HSLDA offers resources and help at *hslda.org/strugglinglearner*.

What about socialization and enrichment activities?

Research has found that most homeschooled students are involved in a wide variety of outside

activities, interact with a broad spectrum of people, and contribute to their communities. Experience has shown that homeschoolers are well socialized and able to make lasting friendships across age and cultural divides.

What about the high school years?

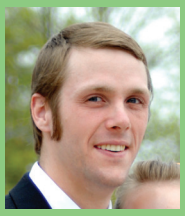
Homeschooling your child through high school offers great benefits for parents and students. Sure, there will be challenges, such as more-difficult subject matter. On the other hand, your high schooler requires less supervision and can take increasing charge of his or her own education.

You can do it, and HSLDA wants to help you! Check out the great resources at *hslda.org/highschool*. HSLDA's high school consultants—moms who've graduated their own children from high school at home—bring a wealth of experience and friendly advice to share with member families who are navigating these challenging yet exciting years.

What about a diploma, graduation, and college?

Homeschool graduates are able to receive high school diplomas and attend college just like other students. Some participate in graduation ceremonies hosted by their state or local homeschool associations.

Students who have utilized community colleges for foreign language, lab science, or higher mathematics courses discover as an added bonus that these course credits make it easier to enroll in four-year colleges after high school graduation.



FOUNDATION FOR ADULTHOOD

Being homeschooled from kindergarten through high school was a wonderful building block for my post-secondary education. After graduating, I majored in civil engineering and minored in mathematics at the University of Nebraska. I found that some of my freshman classes covered information I had studied at home during high school. I had learned good study skills at home that helped me understand difficult material. Perhaps the most beneficial tool I learned at home was public speaking, which my parents emphasized and which has been valuable at both school and work.

I was able to land a job with a local engineering consulting firm during my last semester of college, and later I returned to school part-time and graduated with an MS in civil engineering. I credit homeschooling with giving me a good start in education, life, and work!

—Caleb Beasley

J. Gary Knowles, a University of Toronto researcher, has found homeschoolers to be more self-reliant and focused. "They're able to move into adulthood with a much better . . . sense as to what they want to do," he said . . . "Where did we ever get the idea that 2,000 13-year-olds were the ideal people with which to socialize other 13-year-olds?"

Fox News, "First Wave of Homeschoolers Comes of Age," April 5, 2002

Useful tips

Struggle
you Can do it!
Children
Money
Classical
Stress
Style
field Trips
Oh!
Unit Studies
Tips
Curriculum
library
Learn
Calculus
Relax
Cool
Conference
huh?
What
Time
Latin
home
Problems
Question
family
School
friends

Tip 1: Get plugged in

Join your local and state support groups, participate in local homeschool events, and talk with veterans who can show you the ropes. Plan to attend a homeschool convention—most states have at least one. You can find contact information for your state group—usually the host of state or regional conventions—and local support groups by visiting *hslda.org/mystate*.

Tip 2: Tune in to your child's learning style

Homeschooling enables you to tailor your child's education to his or her unique style of learning. "Children's overall learning style includes both the channel through which she/he learns (eye, ear, or hand) and the ways in which she/he is most motivated to learn—'thinking style'" (*Mary Pride's Complete Guide to Getting Started in Homeschooling*). Other resources:

- *The Way They Learn* by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias
- *Help! My Child Isn't Learning* by Dr. Grant Martin
- *Discover Your Child's Learning Style* by Mariaemma Willis and Victoria Kindle Hodson
- *hslda.org/earlyyears/LearningStyles.asp*

Tip 3: Select a type of curriculum and method of homeschooling

There are almost as many curriculum combinations and educational philosophies as there are homeschooling families. Many families find their teaching style and curriculum choices altering to meet their growing children's changing needs. Here's a nutshell description of some general categories:

- **Traditional**—Textbook/workbook approach, emphasizing reading, writing, grammar, and spelling through drill and practice.
- **Classical**—Following the medieval "trivium," a child's education progresses from fundamental facts and skills to logic and advanced language abilities. Students study the great works of Western literature.
- **Unit studies** (instructor-designed thematic studies)—Progress in several disciplines is woven around a particular theme.
- **Child-directed/Delight-directed/"Unschooling"**—Allowing children to learn by encouraging and equipping them to pursue their own interests (guided or unguided exploration).

One of the great things about homeschooling is that you don't have to be limited to just one approach—you can mix and match, taking what you like from each approach, to maximize your child's learning.

Tip 4: Attend a curriculum fair

Curriculum fairs, often held in conjunction with state or regional homeschool conferences, provide you with an opportunity to check out the curricula you've been researching. Not only can you look through the materials, but you can ask questions of the publisher representatives as well. Beverly McCord, who founded the Arlington Book Fair with her husband Kirk, offers this advice: "Just stand at a publisher's booth for about 10 minutes and get an earful of what homeschoolers think about some of the titles of that publisher—which ones are the jewels that everybody's using and which ones are really not that helpful."

Tip 5: Tap into the used curriculum market

Once you've decided what you're going to buy, check out what's available through the used curriculum market. You can borrow or swap materials with other homeschoolers, or check books out of the local library. You may want to explore regional and state curriculum fairs, which often feature used curriculum sales. There are also used curriculum vendors online.

Tip 6: Choose a place to do school

In the kitchen? Living room? In a school room? Each family finds solutions that work for them. For some creative ideas for streamlining and maximizing your space, check out these resources:

- *Help for the Harried Homeschooler: A Practical Guide to Balancing Your Child's Education with the Rest of Your Life* by Christine Field
- *Clutter's Last Stand* by Don Aslett
- *youcanhomeschool.org* (Click "Useful Tips")

Tip 7: Be creative with field trips

Start with nearby chambers of commerce, tourism offices, historical societies, town halls, craft guilds, fire/rescue companies, other support groups, and yellow pages. Next, try your local library or bookstore for family travel guides for the region in which you are interested . . . and then use your imagination!

Tip 8: Winning over friends and relatives

If you have some skeptical relatives or friends, you're not alone. You can make a difference by explaining why you are homeschooling. Consider putting together a scrapbook or portfolio with samples of your child's best work for the year. Many homeschooling families have won the respect, and even changed the opinions, of nearby critics simply through pro-

viding positive social interaction and allowing their children's educational success to speak for itself.

Tip 9: Tackling the subjects that are out of your comfort zone

Maybe you could trade science labs for French lessons! Many homeschooling parents have found they can round out their children's education by trading teaching time in their areas of expertise—usually referred to as *co-oping*. Or get help from a private tutor (could be a friend or coworker).

Tip 10: Adjusting to life on one income

Many families have faced this challenge and share the innovative ways they found to meet their goals.

- *Miserly Moms*, *Frugal Families*, and *Miserly Meals* by Jonni McCoy
- *youcanhomeschool.org* (Click "Useful Tips")

"In [Dr. Brian Ray's 2008] study, homeschoolers scored 34–39 percentile points higher than the norm on standardized achievement tests."

Homeschool Progress Report 2009: Academic Achievement and Demographics (HSLDA and Brian D. Ray, 2009)

LIBRARY TIPS

I've been homeschooling for over 20 years, and one of the best homeschool resources I know of is the library! I can find books in every subject. Using the online catalog, I can do extensive searches on school topics, place books on hold, access e-books, and even join book discussions—all from the comfort of my own home.

The internet is another great resource that helps me save time and money. I can chat with fellow homeschoolers, print off free worksheets, find teaching tips, access incredible educational videos, and research any topic online.

—Geni Hall

Need more help?

In 1983, two homeschooling dads who also happened to be lawyers—Michael P. Farris and J. Michael Smith—formed Home School Legal Defense Association to defend and advance the constitutional rights of parents to direct the education of their children and protect family freedoms.

Since then, HSLDA has defended thousands of families whose choice to teach their own children was being challenged in the courts, legislatures, and media. Today, more than 80,000 HSLDA members—families like yours—stand together to protect homeschool rights and freedoms.

WHY SHOULD I JOIN?

Protect your right to homeschool 24/7

We're here to defend your right to homeschool. Our legal team can answer your questions, interact with school district officials on your behalf, and intervene if your right to homeschool is challenged.

Our emergency answering service offers access to an HSLDA attorney after regular business hours—24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Consistent with government regulations, we cannot guarantee representation in every case. However, in practice, we have come to the aid of thousands of members and many nonmembers to protect and advance the right of all to homeschool.

Stay connected and informed

HSLDA's e-lert service notifies you immediately whenever legislation threatens homeschooling in your state; our website offers the latest homeschooling news, resources, links, and analysis of issues you care about; and our quarterly membership magazine, the *Home School Court Report*, brings you in-depth reporting on our current cases and articles on a wide variety of homeschool topics.

Help the homeschooling community

Even if you never need to call HSLDA, your membership helps other families who need us! Each year, thousands of families are able to confidently step into the "unknown" of homeschooling because they've got friends—like you—standing beside them.

HOW CAN HSLDA HELP ME . . .

Teach my struggling learner?

HSLDA's special needs consultants offer expert counseling and helpful materials to members whose children face special challenges.

Homeschool my high schooler or younger child?

Our high school and Toddlers to Tweens consultants are just a phone call or email away, ready to offer advice, resources, and encouragement.

Save money?

Your membership includes specially negotiated discounts with nationwide companies. See *hslda.org/memberdiscounts*.

In Spanish?

Visit *hslda.org/espanol* to access our Spanish webpages. You can find information about your state or territory's homeschool laws at *hslda.org/laws/espanol.asp*. Have a question for one of HSLDA's attorneys or education consultants? Our on-staff Spanish interpreter is happy to help you!

YOUR HOMESCHOOL COMMUNITY

One of the most important things you can do as a family is connect with your homeschool community. Whether you get involved in a local support group, become a member of your state homeschool organization, or join HSLDA (preferably all three!), you'll find a network of people who can help you homeschool successfully. We don't know what we would have done during our court case without the legal help of HSLDA and the caring support of our state group!

In addition to providing information and resources, these groups can give you encouragement for difficult times. There's no better way to strengthen your homeschool than to be part of a strong community.

—Richard and Margie Cressy

You’ve got this!

Homeschooling Toddlers to Tweens is here for you!

HSLDA's Toddlers to Tweens program equips and encourages parents homeschooling children from preschool through 8th grade. On our website, *hslda.org/ToddlersToTweens*, you'll find extensive information about teaching your child. While there, sign up for our free monthly email newsletter at *hslda.org/earlyyears/newsletters.asp*—it's full of pointers and practical help!

Toddlers to Tweens Consultants Vicki Bentley and Stacey Wolking bring a wealth of friendly advice to share out of their own experiences as homeschooling mothers. As an exclusive HSLDA benefit, they provide personal consultation by phone and email to HSLDA members who need specific answers about homeschooling their children. To contact them, go to *hslda.org/contactstaff* or call 540-338-5600.

Stacey Wolking and Vicki Bentley

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Not yet an HSLDA member?
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www.HSLDA.org

K-8th

Rewarding