

# Mystery shopper: pottery barn kids project essay



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In recent decades there has been a dramatic increase in the number of American parents who choose to provide their children's education at home rather than use the public school system. In the 1960's only about 10, 000 students were home schooled. By 2001, that number had reached 1 million (Lines, 2001). There has always been some degree of controversy attached to the issue of home schooling. There has been a gradual shift in public opinion as home schooling gains more acceptance. A Gallup poll revealed that 73% of respondents believed that home schooling is a " bad thing".

When the poll was repeated in 1997, disapproval had dropped to 57% (2001). The increased acceptance has been driven by the positive results gained in a number of studies about the academic performance of home schooled children. At the same time, a perception that the public schools are " failing" has taken root in American society. The growth in home schooling has led to a growth in industries that support home schoolers.

There also have been increased attempts by state and local authorities to regulate the practice of home schooling. About half the states have policies in place to evaluate student progress and/or certify home teachers. Parents considering home schooling must weigh carefully the general advantages and disadvantages, as well as the specific personal effects on the family. The Advantages Parents who home school their children often have a greater influence over the lives than public school parents. As a result, they are able to either negate some of the negative influences children receive or prevent them all together.

Home schooled students are not subject to the intense peer pressure that is present within the public schools. Academically, home schooled students are able to work at their own pace. They are neither slowed by the overall pace of the class, nor hurried through material they have difficulty with. Generally speaking, it is much easier for one teacher to keep one student on task than it is for one teacher to keep thirty students on task.

A number of studies have found results similar to the following, conducted among a large sample of Iowa students: ...the achievement test scores of this group of students was exceptionally high...25% of home school students are enrolled one or more grades above their age level. (Rudner, 1999) Good study habits tend to extend to good habits in other areas. Contrary to what might be expected, home school students spend less time watching television than their public school peers. Increased television watching has been correlated with decreased academic performance (Lines, 2001). Home schoolers use computers more than their public school counterparts, but this extra time is spent on academic study.

Parents who home school their children have a greater opportunity to monitor computer use and steer the student away from trouble. For parents who wish to teach faith and/or character-based education, home schooling offers a clear advantage over public schools. By law, the public schools must avoid religious education. Elements of character education are often associated with religious education; therefore the public schools must avoid them. Home school students are also removed from the bad behavior and bad influences of other students.

“ Home school parents are, by definition, heavily involved in their children’s education” (Rudner, 1999). More parental involvement, whether the student learns at home or in public school, can only be beneficial. The reality, though, is that some parents may not be willing or able to provide the level of discipline and commitment for a home schooled student to succeed. The Drawbacks A primary criticism of home schooling is the lack of peer interaction.

Home school students typically have contact with adults but less with their own age group. They may participate in scouts, youth sports leagues or other peer related activities, but these cannot replicate the socialization that takes place in public school. Home schoolers may have less exposure to people of different cultures, beliefs or religions. In a multicultural society early exposure to others who are different is important. A full day in public allows kids not only to get to know others, but also allows them to learn how to work cooperatively with others. In addition, the unique, bonding experience of going through school as a group is lost for the home schooled student.

Sports, music and other extracurricular options for home school students may be limited. Some public schools allow home schoolers to participate in their activities, but this is still the exception rather than the rule. Otherwise home school students must find youth sports leagues or take private music lessons. Opportunities to do this are fairly common, but the parents may be faced with additional costs, including the cost of travel. In either case it is hard to replicate the unique experiences public school children enjoy in

extracurricular activities sponsored by the school. For many students, these activities are a key motivating factor for doing well in school.

One factor in the effectiveness of a home school education appears to be how much money is spent on materials, tutoring and other associated services (Rudner, 1999). Home schooling necessitates a financial sacrifice for parents already paying public school taxes. Materials and tutoring services can be expensive. There can also be a loss of family income when one parent decides to teach at home instead of work. For these reasons, the vast majority of home schooled students come from two-parent families of middle to high incomes. Theoretically, a home schooled student is free from many of the time wasting activities that take place in public schools.

There is no need for roll-taking, class changes, busy work or other activities that subtract from the actual time spent learning. In the home, however, distractions are all around. The student has ready access to televisions, computers, video games and cell phones. It is easier than ever for the student's mind to wander. At least in the public school, the students are put on a regimented schedule and some of these potential distractions are removed. Consequently, it often takes an extraordinarily dedicated parent to keep the student on track in the home school environment.

For parents, some aspects of home schooling are two-sided. For instance, being with the kids all the time is enjoyable for some but a strain for others. For those who find it enjoyable it can be easy for the parent to slip into a "friend" role. Before long the student is doing school work on his or her own time, instead of what the teacher asks. There is still some societal stigma to

home schooling. In some circles home schooling is not thought of as “normal”.

This can affect such things as college admissions and employment choices. Analysis and Conclusion Is better academic performance the result of home schooling, or is it simply an indicator of greater parental commitment and involvement in the education of the student? The likely answer is that it is some combination of both. The percentage to which each applies depends on the individual student. To say that home schooled students are better off than their public school counterparts is to make too simplistic of an argument. Home schooling does not work for all students. It should be thought of as a potential option, but not a panacea.

Home schooling is not all done at home. Parents need to engage the student in socialization activities with his or her peers. Opportunities for extracurricular activities vary by area. In previous years, home schoolers were much more isolated. Today there is a growing network of support groups and services. Some public school systems are allowing home schoolers to participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities.

Many factors go into the decision of whether to home school or not. The availability of resources, the skill of the prospective teacher and the financial impacts must be assessed. Even more importantly, the individual personalities and relative commitment level of the student and teacher must be determined in an ongoing basis. For the student and parent who are equally motivated, home schooling has a number of benefits. The student is not held back by a slower moving public school classroom.

A number of time-wasting elements of public schools are eliminated. There is also the potential for a closer bond between parent and child that affords the parent greater influence in the child's life. Sources Lines, Patricia M. (2001). "Homeschooling".

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