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# Homeschooling: Achieving Goals!

*Can advantages of homeschooling help students become successful?*

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"You went to school at HOME?" How many times have I heard that question?

Home-schooling or home education is a "hot" topic in legislative, judicial and educational circles today. Many educators are concerned with the difficulty of evaluating the academic and social development of home-educated children.

On the other hand, parents are insisting that their rights and responsibilities to ensure that their children receive a quality education and to choose the form of that education be upheld. The intensity with which professionals and parents are pursuing a balance in this issue is evidenced by the growing number of court cases and new legislation dealing with alternative methods of education.

"You went to school at HOME?" Yes, I went to school at home from fourth through twelfth grade, and I am proud of my education!

The final analysis of home-schooled individuals should not be simply how they score on tests or how successful a social life they have, but should ask, "Are the goals of home education being achieved?"

Are these children growing up and becoming mature, responsible, literate citizens, - a benefit to society and not a burden?

I contend that home-schoolers are achieving their goals, and before professional educators question the recipe, they should taste the pudding. The proof is there!

Yes, I know how to read; - I know who Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, John Steinbeck and Agatha Christie are. Yes, I know how to count, and do basic arithmetic, algebra, geometry and business math. Yes, I can write, type and use a word processor.

Many people do not realize that home-schooling is not a new, revolutionary concept, although it may be revolution-causing!

Quite a few of America's most influential individuals, - politicians, inventors and authors, - were home-schooled for part or all of their education. For instance, a 1986 publication by the Texas Home School Coalition lists John Quincy Adams, William Penn, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, General George Patton, General Douglas McArthur and Agatha Christie among those who received their education at home.

Contemporary home-schooled public figures include Dr. Frank VanDiver, president of Texas A&M University (home-tutored after the seventh grade) and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (home-tutored for one year).

No one can deny that these home-educated individuals have left their marks on the world!

Many professionals express concern that parents may be academically incapable of teaching their own children, but I believe that this is the key strength of home education.

Whenever a subject went beyond both my own and my parents' experience, we would dig until we found the answers. After exhausting our home reference library (several dictionaries, atlases and two sets of encyclopedias, plus supplemental texts and reference books), we would consult local public and college libraries, as well as seeking the advice of professionals in that particular field.

Students in traditional schools do not have the time or flexibility for such valuable information searches.

Home-schooling gave me the opportunity, and my parents encouraged me to take advantage of this, to pursue any interests and develop my particular abilities in any direction I chose.



In addition to my schoolwork, I bought, trained and supported my own horse and a Shetland pony; took classical piano and art lessons; performed in a youth chorale and a five-octave handbell choir; was president of my 4-H club and had a monopoly of the babysitting business on my street.

Throughout my high school years, the option to attend public school was left open to me, but I did not want to give up the flexibility of my schedule and all the extracurricular opportunities was able to take advantage of.

"How did you adjust to college life?" people often ask me.

For me, the only real difference between going to college going to school at home was that at college I went to lectures and labs in addition to the reading, studying, researching, writing papers, and taking tests, all of which I was already in the habit of doing at home.

I had no difficulty gaining admission to the small, two-year state college I chose to attend. In fact, the school awarded me one of its top two academic scholarships, which fully covers tuition.

As far as my social development, I don't feel I have suffered any severe detrimental effects, considering my current extracurricular activities, which include serving as president of Horse Club, managing editor of the campus magazine - *the Image*, representative to the Student Government Organization and member of Phi Theta Kappa, a national academic honors fraternity.

Home instruction is combining many of the ingredients which educators complain are missing from traditional schools, - parental involvement, smaller class size, individualized curriculum, personal instruction, more flexibility in schedules and structures, and more hands-on learning experience, in addition to saving taxpayers thousands of dollars per student annually.

Home-schoolers are making the grade, both in school and after graduation. The proof is in the pudding!