

Homeschoolers reveal the path to greater academic achievement – Deregulation Of Public, Private and Home Schools Is Good for Children

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A NY Times op-ed piece by Thomas L. Friedman, *U.S.G. and P.T.A.* discusses how public education can be improved but offers weak solutions.ⁱ This piece prompted the following questions to an email discussion loop: “At the K-12 level I wonder how homeschooled students and private school students compare to public school students. If homeschool and private school educated students perform better than public school students what lessons are there for public school educators?” As a homeschool advocate for the last 20 years I’ll offer my thoughts.

My husband and I educated our three children via homeschooling. One is now a Civil Engineer, the second has a degree in Finance and Economics and currently applying to law school and the youngest is studying Environmental Engineering. Homeschooling K-12 was a successful undertaking for our family. We did not have “gifted” students, just regular kids whose parents took full responsibility for the education of their children.

Studies conducted in the 1990s revealed that homeschooled students were averaging scores in the 82nd percentile as compared to the 50th for public school students on standardized tests. As the homeschool population grew one would expect the percentile average to drop. However the opposite is true; homeschooled students now score in the 87th percentile (*Homeschool Achievement Confirmed*).ⁱⁱ

In contrast, studies show that the public charter school movement is not producing significantly higher standardized test scores than traditional public schools. I predict the same will be true of the newer “virtual” public school charters. They certainly won’t produce “average” test scores in the 87th percentile.

Why the difference? Simply put... regulation! The more government regulates an industry, including education, the poorer the outcome. Conversely, direct parental control of education, tailored to the needs of the child not the mandates of the state, produces proven results. The homeschool study also reveals that the extent of government regulation has no bearing on the homeschooled students’ achievement levels.ⁱⁱⁱ

So, can homeschooling be duplicated in the public schools? No, it can’t because homeschooling, or “tutorial” education, is philosophically different from “mass” education. However, perhaps the concept of deregulation can be applied.

In 2007, Nevada passed the Homeschool Freedom Bill and removed oversight of homeschooling by the State Board of Education who had greatly over-regulated homeschooling, as compared to other states, since 1982. The new homeschool law requires parents to provide instruction in English, Math, Social Studies, and Science. However, these subjects may be taught as appropriate for the child's age and academic level as determined by the parent.

Parental control of homeschooling is far better than government regulation. On the rare occasion a child isn't receiving an education, the parents could face "educational neglect" charges in a court of law rather than before a state "regulatory body". The parent takes full responsibility to provide an education to the child and answers to the court, not the public school system.

Nevada private schools, both licensed and exempt, are dogged by state regulation. As a result I suspect their students are not performing as well as they could on standardized tests. If private schools were free from regulation by public education bureaucrats and answered only to their students' parents, county building codes and consumer protection laws, they too would enjoy greater success both in their bottom line and with regard to student achievement.

Parents need to understand that public education, even with "choice", is not a requirement for their kids. Just as they seek the best development methods for their children age 0 to 5 years, parents should consider education alternatives with more predictable success rates. We have been brainwashed to believe that only a "certified teacher, a professional" can educate children... hogwash, the parent is best suited to decide how, when and where their child is educated.

The reality however, is that public schools in America are here to stay. How then can they be improved? The homeschool model suggests that deregulation is the answer. Federal oversight should be eliminated. States should be limited to determining minimum public education standards, licensing public school teachers, and distribution of tax dollars to school districts who, along with parents, then decide how best to educate children attending the local public school. Accountability would return to the local community. In this information age there is no longer a need for the level of federal and in some regards state control currently foisted upon families and communities.

ⁱ Friedman, Thomas L., (2010 , November 23). *U.S.G. and P.T.A.*, The New York Times Company, New York, NY. NYTimes.com

ⁱⁱ Ray, Brian D./National Home Education Research Institute and H.S.L.D.A. (2009). *Homeschool Progress Report 2009: Academic Achievement and Demographics*, Home School Legal Defense Association, Purcellville, VA. www.hslda.org

ⁱⁱⁱ Slatter, Ian, (2009, August 10). *New Nationwide Study Confirms Homeschool Academic Achievement*, Home School Legal Defense Association, Purcellville, VA. www.hslda.org