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Beginning Homeschooling FAQ's

Tags: beginning diploma homeschooling legal Minnesota parenting socialization

your first question will probably be, "Is homeschooling for me?"

Taking the first step into home educating your children can be very intimidating. No doubt, you will want to do as much research as you can before you take that step. There are many fine articles in the "Resources" section of this website that will help you to make an intelligent decision.

Your first question will probably be something like, "Is homeschooling for me?" The exercise below will help you determine if home education is for you and, if so, help you create a vision for your homeschool adventure.

- Answer the following questions on paper.
- Discuss your individual answers as a couple.
- Read through MÂCHÉ's responses.

We suggest both you and your spouse complete a self evaluation separately and then discuss your answers together.

Questions to Consider in your self evaluation

- **Why are you considering home education for your children?**

  MÂCHÉ's Response: *Your reasons for considering home education can be numerous:*

  - *You may have friends who home educate and you like what you see, both in the educational training of their children and in the character of their children.*
  - *You may not like the curriculum trends in public/private education and you would like to choose the curriculum for your children.*
  - *You may want to impact your children with a strong biblical worldview, which cannot be achieved through public/private schools.*

  Although home education can be seen merely as an alternative when a child is having difficulties in a public or private school setting, this alone should not be the basis of your reasoning. Our experience indicates that successful home educators must possess a fervent desire to teach their children themselves.

  We encourage you to spend time in prayer as you weigh your reasons for home educating. Discuss them together with your spouse. Observe other home educating families and, if you feel comfortable, ask to meet with them and find out how they made the decision to home educate. Remember that God commands us to be responsible for our children (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

- **How would you define home education?**

  MÂCHÉ's Response: *In recent years some have begun to question just exactly what homeschooling is. The following description is the result of thoughtful discussion by the MÂCHÉ Board of Directors with input from other experienced home educators. We believe the description to be representative of effective, quality home education.*

  "MÂCHÉ believes the traditional family is the foundation of society and that parents have the God-given

responsibility to determine the proper education for their children. Home education takes place when children are primarily taught and evaluated under the authority of their own parents in their own home. We believe that parents, not government, should determine the curriculum and standards for their own children. MÂCHÉ believes that home education fulfills its highest calling when parents educate their own children according to Christ-centered, biblical principles."

Homeschooling your children is not something to be taken lightly. It requires dedication and sacrifice. It is an adventure-filled journey—sometimes more difficult than you could imagine—yet at other times the most rewarding of choices you could ever make. You and your spouse are the teacher, principal, counselor and curriculum advisor. Your family will spend much more time together than is typical in today's American culture. Therefore, spending some time thinking and discussing your views on homeschooling with your spouse will make it easier for you to "fit" homeschooling to your family and its lifestyle. It will determine your choices in curriculum and activities that your children take part in, who will teach them, and who is ultimately in authority of their education.

- **Have you considered and are you willing to make the changes home education will bring to your family?**

  MÂCHÉ's Response: *Home education will have a positive impact on your home life (whether you are starting from the very beginning of your child's school years or you are taking a child out of public/private school) if you do some preparation beforehand. We are not saying it will be easy! There will be adjustments in your family's routine, and these adjustments can be challenging at times. Parents beginning to homeschool right at the start may find the transition easier than those families who have to adjust from the routines of public/private school to home education.*

  Be prepared to spend the majority of your day with your children—this will require you and your spouse to be spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally ready. Everyone is in the trenches on the bad days and everyone rejoices on the good days—together! You will teach your children yourself, using curriculum of your choice.

  As you consider the effect home education will have on your family, we encourage you to also consider the value of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

- **What do you know about the history of home education in Minnesota?**

  MÂCHÉ's Response: *Understanding the history of the homeschool movement in Minnesota will help you develop your definition of home education and your personal understanding of why you are considering home education. It is our hope you will catch a vision for homeschooling your own children, and also be encouraged to continue the work of carefully guarding the freedom to homeschool.*

  During the 1980s and 1990s, parents who homeschooled their children were challenged by the public school districts, social workers and neighbors. They were charged with truancy and threatened with prosecution for child neglect, merely because they were doing what they thought God called them to do. Some families had to hide inside their homes with drapes fully drawn to elude the attention of curious neighbors and intrusive social workers.

  The right of Minnesota parents to homeschool their children has been guaranteed by law since 1987. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. Some public school districts take an adversarial role toward home educators. Other districts offer services to home educators that may draw them back into the governmental system, providing more state 'per pupil' dollars for the local district budget. Each year, legislation is closely monitored to safeguard against legislation by elected officials who are very interested in imposing burdensome regulations upon home educators that could effectively reduce or eliminate the home education freedoms that parents have worked so hard to secure.

  The freedoms that we now enjoy will only remain intact if we who are involved in the movement do our part to keep them that way through praying for our leaders, keeping abreast of issues on the home education front, and making calls to legislators if necessary. If parents begin without this knowledge, they risk making serious mistakes with the public school district or the state government that will not only make their schooling more cumbersome, but could actually set legal precedent and reduce the current freedoms of Minnesota home educators.

more questions? check out these homeschool FAQs

- What is home education?
- What are the advantages of home education?

- What are the disadvantages of home education?
- Who may home educate in Minnesota?
- What about socialization?
- How do I get started?
- What does it cost to home educate?
- What about other options?
- How does my home educated child receive a diploma?
- Will my child be able to get into college if he is home educated?
- Will my home educated child be able to function in the "real world" as an adult?
- How do I get more information about home education in Minnesota?

what is home education?

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What are the advantages of home education?

- Learning together builds strong family relationships. Home education is a lifestyle, not a project.
- Parents have greater opportunity for character training with their children.
- Parents are able to choose the worldview through which they will teach their children.
- Parents are able to tailor a curriculum and course of study to their child's individual abilities, learning style, needs, and future goals.
- Parents have the flexibility to move at the child's pace, spending more time or less time mastering particular concepts or subjects.
- Children receive one-on-one tutorial-style teaching.
- Children have more time to pursue areas of interest.
- High school students can jump-start their college education or career preparation.

what are the disadvantages of home education?

According to homeschoolers' feedback, the biggest disadvantage facing the homeschooling family is loss of income. Someone must be home, at least part-time, to facilitate the children's learning. At a time when it can often be difficult to get by on two incomes, it can be a real challenge to get by on just one.

Some of the other difficulties facing homeschooling parents include lack of confidence in their own and their children's abilities, public and/or family criticism, and adjusting career goals and work schedules to accommodate the needs of the

family. One last challenge humorously cited by homeschoolers is that of housekeeping. When you use your home full-time for homeschooling (and in some cases even for work), things can get a bit messy. But don't worry, those books piled high on the coffee table, the science experiment on the table, and the art project in the patio are all signs that your child is learning.

Who may home educate in Minnesota?

Any parent may home educate in Minnesota provided the provisions of Minnesota statute 120A.22 are met.

What about socialization?

This is the number one question people ask homeschoolers. The *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* defines the word "social" as "relating to men living in society; disposed to mix in friendly converse; companionable."

Many homeschoolers have discovered healthy socialization takes place when children are exposed to people of all ages in various settings, rather than being limited to a classroom and a group of students all about the same age. Children learn social skills in everyday activities such as trips to the grocery store or library, visits with grandparents, church activities with friends, support group activities, park days, and community activities. Most importantly, children often receive their most valuable socialization in the nurturing environment of home and family.

How do I get started?

- Read books about home education and talk to homeschooling parents. Attend a MÂCHÉ Considering Homeschooling Workshop or come to the annual MÂCHÉ Conference for workshops pertaining to new homeschoolers.
- Become convinced that home education is what you and your spouse want for your family.
- Develop a Mission Statement. This keeps you aware of your purpose for home education.
- Set goals for the year.
- Choose and order curricula. The annual MÂCHÉ Conference is a great place to view the wide variety of curricula and resources available to home educators - in person.
- Become acquainted with your materials.
- Create a learning environment in your home.
- Plan a daily schedule and prepare lessons in advance.
- Keep written records.
- Follow state laws of accountability.
- Give teaching top priority for your time.
- Find a homeschool support group in your area.
- Realize that there will be trial and error. Be willing to adapt as needed.

what does it cost to home educate?

The cost of home education is as varied as the individual families who teach their children at home. It depends on many factors.

- The type of curriculum and resources you choose to purchase.
- The amount and type of extracurricular activities in which your child participates.
- Field trips you choose to take.

Home education is an investment - a very worthy investment - in your children and their future!

what about other options?

Government-funded programs for home educators are enticing. They provide free materials and educational experiences to homeschooling families. But what price do parents pay to participate in these programs? You might want to check out the DVD in MÂCHÉ's store, Exposing a Trojan Horse, which uncovers the hidden costs of parents participating in government-funded programs for home educators.

Virtual Charter Schools have increased in popularity in recent years. This taxpayer-funded system attempts to achieve a sort of "compromise" between a public school education and a real homeschooling experience. The idea is that, using a Government-sanctioned curriculum, the student can have a homeschool-like experience, while the parents enjoy such benefits as academic excellence and cost savings. But is this reality? Do Virtual Charter Schools deliver what they promise?

The answers to these questions are a resounding "No!" These and other virtual Charter School myths are addressed powerfully by the Idaho Coalition of Home Educators (ICHE). In short, ICHE says, *"The practical effect of enrollment in a virtual Charter School program is to bring the public school district into the home of the student."* We enthusiastically recommend the Idaho Coalitions"s entire analysis, provided here.

Minnesota's experience with publicly-funded virtual academies mirrors the poor results found in other states like Idaho. John Tuma, MÂCHÉ board member and Legislative Liaison, noted the following concerning virtual public school at home:

> *"Recently the highly respected office of the Legislative Auditor, in a programmatic review of minnesota's publicly funded online schools, found performance of online schools woefully lacking, in comparison to students who attend traditional public schools, the full-time online students' academic test scores were significantly lower, they showed less progress, and in some cases their dropout rate was eight times higher. "MÂCHÉ and other homeschool leaders have been warning about the dangers of these government-funded programs for years, and now the studies are bearing out the concerns we have raised. You can find the Office of the Legislative Auditor's report is available online at http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/k12oll.pdf."*

How does my home educated child receive a diploma?

Parents create and maintain their child's transcript and issue the diploma. Home educated students are nt required to take any of the state-mandated tests that are required for public school graduation. There are factors that you will want to consider, depending upon the path that your child wants t take upon graduating from homeschool. Here are a few helpful resources for homeschooling through high school.

- *Homeschooling Through High School* website: www.hslda.org/highschool
- *Transcript Pro* and *Transcript Bood Camp* DVD: www.edplus.com
- *Mentoring Your Teen: Charting the Course to Successful Adulthood* by Dr. Ronald and Inge Cannon: www.edplus.com
- *The High School Handbook: Junior and Senior High at Home* by Mary Schofield: www.cheaofca.org

will my child be able to get into college if he is home educated?

Homeschoolers are accepted and recruited by some of the top universities in the country because of their maturity,

independent thinking skills, creativity, and strong academic preparation. Homeschoolers perform above average on the ACT. Success on the ACT test reveals that the courses taken by high school students to prepare for college have been effective. Homeschoolers also placed highest on the SAT college entrance exams, higher than private and public school students.

In addition to academic success, homeschoolers have had athletic success in college. Coaches are recruiting homeschooled athletes, and in 2001 the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) declared about 100 homeschooled students eligible for athletics as freshmen at major universities, up from 85 the year before. An article in Time magazine on September 11, 2000, reported that 26 percent of 35 homeschooled applicants had been accepted into Stanford University's 2000-2001 freshman class. This is nearly double the rate of overall acceptance.

will my home educated child be able to function in the "real world" as an adult?

Those exploring homeschooling for the first time sometimes worry that their child will not be able to function in the "real world" if they don't attend "real school" and have the same social experiences as schooled children. But what do schools really do? They separate kids by age and ability, reinforce class and gender stereotypes, and limit children's interactions to short recess periods. Schoolchildren are forced to socialize with children only their own age and are trapped in a room six to seven hours a day, allowed to view the outside world only through a textbook. Where in the real world are adults forced to socialize with only someone their own age? Competition, bullying, consumerism, and cruel teasing are often the social values children learn at school.

Homeschooled children are more likely to base their decisions on values they learn from their parents instead of feeling compelled to go along with the crowd and accept the behavior of what other children are displaying as the "norm". Because homeschoolers spend so much time out in the real world, they are able to communicate well and get along with both adults and children. They even get along with their siblings, and it is common for homeschooling families to receive positive comments about their children's strong, warm sibling relationships.

How do I get more information about home education in Minnesota?

The MÂCHÉ website and newsletters, *The Paper MÂCHÉ* and *The Non-Paper MÂCHÉ*, contain current issues, tips, and information that will be a great benefit to you as a new homeschooler. The *MÂCHÉ Handbook Online* is a 240-page wealth of information for all home educators in all areas of homeschool interest. These publications are member only benefits.

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