

The Myth of Socialization

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It is my opinion that if socializing is a problem for homeschool families, it is rare. I am a retired teacher with experience in public, private, and homeschool settings. It was not possible to homeschool our son, because I had to work, but with hindsight I wish I had been able to work out the hindrances. Our son was private Christian schooled entirely, and we expected our values and biblical training to be supported. But the result was a not-deep-enough biblical reinforcing from that source, and he was exposed to negative elements that I didn't expect to find in a private Christian school. We did not learn about that until he told us after he graduated. He was afraid we would cause trouble at the school for him if we knew. Because we did not homeschool him, our influence was limited to evenings, weekends, church, and summers. Our son has become a fine man with a family and has overcome many of the pressures he was exposed to--through much prayer.

Since retiring, I have conducted private and group art lessons for homeschool families. I am also assisting with children's church in which public, private, and homeschool children attend. The difference in the student conduct between the three groups is remarkable. It boils down to *respect* for authority and for other people. We all recognize the disrespect in public schools, but it was an eye-opener for me to have to teach basic respect to a surprising number of private school students. And some students, who began with respect, learned disrespect from their peers. They began to see it as "cool" and wanted to belong. That kind of socialization is definitely on the negative side.

Every homeschool student I have dealt with demonstrates respect in every area--to adults, teachers, and other children. There have been no squabbles with siblings, and they demonstrate true caring for their family members. They are a pleasure to teach. They are not perfect and sometimes need correction, but they are *correctable*. As a public and private Christian school teacher, my constant prayer became, "Lord, please help my students to be teachable and correctable." I have not needed to desperately pray that for the homeschool students. Unless there is a severe disability, homeschool students are teachable and correctable. I also have observed that even an only child who is homeschooled still has contact with others that instills proper relationships. If socialization is ever an issue, it is easily solved, because there seem to be plenty of wholesome socializing opportunities that homeschool families should and do take advantage of. Homeschooling is not solely conducted in the home. The homeschool families that I know attend church where their children are able to socialize, and I suspect that the vast majority do. Homeschool co-ops provide socializing with parental presence. Homeschool learning schedules allow freedom for more excursions and explorations that provide opportunities to interact with a great variety of people of varying ages. Public and private settings pigeon-hole students into similar age groups. The result appears to be large groups of children lacking in social skills who don't know how to relate to people of other ages, specifically to adults.

I have observed that many children are not ready for specific tasks at the age expected of them. Expecting kindergarten students to read by the end of the year is an example. If a child is ready,

great. But many children are not. They are quickly labeled as slow, a loser, or learning-disabled, labels that are difficult to shed. This produces great stress on the child and the educator. The child begins to think that he/she is deficient. It affects behavior in a negative way. Other children are apt to make fun of a student who has not mastered expected material. Sociologist J. Garbarino believes that children are being robbed of their childhood by unreasonable expectations. He presents the facts that twenty percent of children are flunking kindergarten. Proudful parents, thinking that this is a reflection on them will not accept this, but insist that the child continue the path of grade levels. Adult pressure just to look good also causes parents to over-enroll their children in after school programs that keep children so busy that they become stressed and fatigued.

The well-known book by Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore, *Better Late Than Early*, discusses in depth the difficulties of forcing children to learn what they are not ready for. I encountered this personally when I taught math to fifth and sixth grade students. Only one sixth grader was able to grasp the abstract concepts of algebra, yet I had to teach it. The room was filled with frustration, which attacks the attitude of loving to learn. It opens the door for negative social behavior in the classroom and on the playground due to that frustration.

Dr. David Elkind, Professor Emeritus at Tufts University Child Development Department, conducted extensive research on childhood learning. He stated in his book, *The Hurried Child*, that children don't respond well in large groups, because they become fatigued and stressed by too much noise and unreasonable expectations, rigid scheduling, and peer pressure. We all know children who are easily distracted. The public school solution is to medicate. The homeschool solution is to love and exercise the freedom to change the format. Dr. Elkind analyzed over 8,000 studies of child behavior. He determined that children are best socialized by parents and not by other children.

Another study has been conducted by the National Home Education Research Institute (NHRI). The founder, Brian D. Ray, Ph.D., determined that positive social skills scores were higher for homeschooled children than for those educated in the public school system. They also have statistics to prove that homeschool students typically score above average on the SAT and ACT tests and higher on academic achievement tests than do public school students.

This nation did not have public schools for many, many years. Some children were not educated at all as a result. That was one reason for beginning compulsory school attendance. Before compulsory attendance, the majority of children learned at home under the tutelage of one or both parents. Learning did not require students to sit for hours on end making drudgery of learning. They were taught to read and cipher when they were ready. Many learned to read from the Bible. Learning to do chores properly was a significant part of the day, including play time.

The homeschool socialization myth is a misconception perpetrated by people who know little or nothing of the benefits or facts. Some parents believed they would be breaking the law by not sending their children to public school. Unfortunately, there are movements in some states to pass such laws. But as of yet, it is still lawful to homeschool. Most states require documentation, which is reasonable. Other states are lax. Homeschooling as a movement is growing, and that is a

very good thing. According to NHERI, the higher quality of homeschooling is not affected at all by whether or not the parent is a certified teacher, or by any state regulations.

Another benefit of homeschooling is the safety. Many public school students go to school afraid. The bullies are not disciplined properly. A close friend of mine, teaching in a junior high school, was in the hall when a pipe bomb exploded. She just missed being injured. The responsible student was not identified. More than likely the students knew, but because of peer pressure, no one “squealed.” We don’t find anything like that in homeschools.

I believe homeschool children have the proper social training necessary for success during and after their schooling years. They have a stronger sense of right and wrong and are better equipped than even many private Christian school students to overcome the peer pressures of college freedom. They value biblical principles, and have a greater chance of influencing their peers for good, rather than being influenced by them. They appear to be less concerned about what others think of them and more what their families and God think of them. In addition, they are better educated, and they have better skills that employers are looking for.

I am encouraging everyone I know with children to consider homeschooling.

Biographical Information

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