The Benefits of Public School without the Responsibilities

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Benefits of Public School without the Responsibilities

Years ago, the only way children in America could receive an education was to learn at home. As our nation grew and matured, the importance of a formal education became apparent. In 1852, Massachusetts passed the first compulsory attendance law for education. By 1930, all the states had passed similar laws. Public education had begun. In the United States, home schooling has had a resurgence of interest. According to Gewertz (2001), “In the federal government’s most comprehensive study to date of the nation’s home-schooling population, a survey released shows that 850,000 children are being taught primarily at home.” (pg. 1) That number was three years ago, more families have joined the home-schooler’s numbers every year. Dansby-Giles (2002) reported that home school attendance is now estimated at 1.2 million students. Parents that have removed their children from the public school system to home school have produced a two–fold problem. The first being the loss of state revenue per child. The second is the fact that now the parents and children want services from the public school system to enhance their home based education.

According to Allwein (2003), with so many children being educated at home, the issue of whether the public school system has any obligation to assist the home schooled children has caused much debate. Many districts nationwide are being pressured to allow home schooler’s participation in district managed extra-curricular events. Students not attending public schools are requesting to be allowed to take part in plays, musicals, and sports. Allowing these children to take part in these activities would be extremely difficult. Dansby-Giles (2002) stated, “Controversy has centered on the
eligibility requirements of participation in sports programs.” (pg. 3) Traditional students have to meet eligibility requirements such as attendance, behavior and grade point averages. Most states have no accurate way to monitor home school student’s academic and behavioral records, thus making it unfair for the traditional students. In Oklahoma, according to the Academy’s Administration Office, (Legal side-endnotes, 1993), “Oklahoma has no teacher qualifications or tests for home schools.” (pg.4)

Superintendent Scott Myers of USD 218 Elkhart Kansas, acknowledged, “In the state of Kansas, all the parents have to do is sign an affidavit stating they are going to home school their child or children. There are no regulations for testing or monitoring the student’s progress.” (Personal communication, October 11, 2004) Myers also maintains that if students want to participate in extracurricular activities such as plays, sports, and athletics, they should be fully enrolled students. Sherri Hurn, the assistant director of the electronic charter school in Elkhart, Kansas, stated that each child remaining at home to be educated costs the district $7000.00 per year. (Personal communication October 14, 2004) Myers also stated that home schooled children in his district alone cost the Elkhart system over a million and a half dollars annually. One can project that if Elkhart, with a population of 2300 persons, is losing that amount of money, how much money school districts nationwide are losing.

Putting aside the issues of money and extra curricular activities, a more important question arises. Are home schooled children actually receiving an adequate education? On the surface, home schooled students achieve higher marks on standardized
achievement tests. However, Cutlep (cited in Pfleger 2000) pointed out that the only information that is obtained concerning home schooled students is from a limited number of home schooled families. The ratio of diverse students is not accurate. Gewertz (2000) reported seventy-five percent of home schooled students came from non-Hispanic white, compared with public schools reporting sixty-five percent. The surveys are voluntary and many of the parents home schooling for religious reasons want no interference and do not participate in the surveys. It is basically impossible to get an accurate account of home schooled children’s true progress. However, C. Kennedy, (cited in Pfleger 2000) wrote that she has worried about the student who fell several grades behind while being home schooled by his well-meaning mother. The teachers were working hard to re-educate this child, extra hours will cost the taxpayers extra money. Pfleger (2000), says that opponents also worry that learning at home may inhibit the student’s social skills. Students that never interact with students of diversity may have trouble as adults in the workplace. Another concern voiced was in order for students to become well-rounded adults; they must be exposed to viewpoints from adults other than their parents.

S. Hurn stated that home schooled children account for a huge deficit in public school monies. Regardless of the reasons they were pulled out of the public schools, they are putting school systems at risk. In today’s economy the public schools need all the funds they can get. America’s schools spend millions of dollars annually in an attempt to offer our children the best education available. (personal communication 2004) Allwein
(2003) also argues that allowing home schooled children to participate in extracurricular activities was believed by some school board members to be unfair to the regular students. Their argument was the home schooled students perhaps had an unfair advantage in trying out for positions because they had much more free time to practice than traditional public school children. Public schools should not have to shoulder the cost of home schooled children participating in school district activities, states Allwein. These children do not have to meet any of the eligibility requirements traditional students maintain. According to Allwein, if parents do not want their children educated by the public school systems, parents should not expect the public school system to allow them to participate in the extracurricular activities.

In conclusion, Allwein, Dansby-Giles, Gewertz, Orr, and Pfleger, have shown that home schooling is detrimental to the public school system and also to the well being of the students being home schooled. Hurn and Myers have shown the magnitude of state and government financial loss caused by students staying home. Home schooling is not regulated enough to assure the students are receiving a quality education as shown by Myers and Orr. The issues of home schooling have long been debated and will continue to be a topic of debate until stringent regulations are enacted and enforced. (Myers personal communication October, 11, 2004)
References:


http://ericcassunch.edu.


