

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: HOME SCHOOLING: ARE PARTNERSHIPS  
POSSIBLE?

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Home schooling has been described as both the oldest and newest form of education, and as the number of home school students continues to grow, a partnership is beginning to evolve with their local school systems. Some states are offering a variety of educational resources to these students which may include participation in extracurricular activities, classroom instruction, or virtual learning opportunities. This exploratory case study is designed to better understand a parent's choice to home school within the social and institutional framework available to them in Maryland.

Maryland offers home schooling families a choice of monitoring options, through their local public school system or a bona fide church exempt organization. The state does not offer home schooling families any additional educational resources except the opportunity to participate in standardized testing. Home schooling parents monitored

through a local public school system located in the Baltimore-Washington-Northern Virginia Combined Statistical Area were asked to complete a questionnaire designed to ascertain family characteristics and reasons to home school. Respondents were categorized according to their reason to home school – religious/moral, academic, or other. Eight families were randomly chosen from the three categories to participate in a personal interview to discuss their choice to home school, experiences and challenges of home schooling, and if they would be interested in having services made available to them through their local public school system.

Analysis of questionnaire findings and interviews indicated some similarities between the target population and results of the 2003 National Center for Education Statistics survey with the majority in both surveys indicating religion as a main reason to home school. Choosing to be monitored by the local public school runs counter to the literature as did target families' interest in receiving additional services from their local public school such as student participation in extracurricular activities, an ability to take specific classes, and curricula support.

HOME SCHOOLING: ARE PARTNERSHIPS POSSIBLE?

by

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## DEDICATION

This process could not have been completed without the continuous help and patience of my family and especially my husband, Tom. He was my editor, proofreader, and sounding board, and he spent many hours reviewing and reading draft after draft of this dissertation. A special thank also goes to my advisor, Dr. Croninger, for all his support.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **OVERVIEW**

Home schooling appears to be thriving as the home schooling population over the past 30 years has steadily increased in the United States. Home schooling, however, remains an enigma to society. As this phenomenon flourishes it is important to examine critically who comprises the home schooling population, the historical underpinnings of home schooling, and the choice process utilized and available to families as they either opt to not enroll students in public schools or exit from public and private education to home school.

#### **Home Schooling Population**

##### ***Estimating Population***

During the past several decades there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children who routinely do not spend their time in a public or private school classroom, but are being home schooled. With roots in our country's history, home schooling is described as both the oldest and newest form of education (Richman, 1994). As home schooling re-emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, it was considered a somewhat subversive activity (Divoky, 1983; Knowles, 1988). It was seen by society as practiced primarily by an isolated, religious minority (DeVise, 2005); however, there appears to be growing evidence that home schooling is being practiced by a new wave of families, and it is now becoming a popular choice for many families across the United States.

Michael Romanowski (2001) of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) reports that home schooling is appealing to a demographic diversity that includes virtually all races, religions, socioeconomic groups, and political view

points, and as it steadily gains in popularity, home schooling may be viewed now as a more acceptable alternative for educating children than it was 30 years ago (Archer, 1999). Currently, estimates suggest that the home schooling population exceeds the total number of students enrolled in such reforms as charter schools and vouchers, which claim approximately 565,000 students nationally (Cloud & Morse, 2001). As Daniel DeVise (2005) reports the home schooling population has “doubled” since the mid-1990s placing it among the fastest growing segments of K-12 education.

Nonetheless, obtaining an accurate accounting of home schooling families has been difficult since many states define and track home schoolers differently. According to home school advocacy groups, home schooling parents may choose not to comply with state laws requiring them to register home schooled students with their local school board, or families do not join local, state, or national home schooling groups, making them difficult to identify. To compound these problems, a debate persists within the home schooling community itself in regard to cooperating with educational researchers, especially since an unknown number of home schooling families remain underground so as not to draw attention to themselves and refuse to register to home school in their particular states (Archer, 1999; Cardiff, 1996; Lines, 1999; Mathews, 1999).

Efforts to ascertain a representative sample of home schoolers over the past 30 years has been challenging as it has relied on estimates drawn by national home schooling advocacy groups, individual state surveys, and information gathered from state education departments. The U.S. Department of Education has begun to examine home schooling based on parent surveys distributed by the United States Census Bureau. These surveys conducted in 1999 and 2003 by the National Center for Education Statistics

(NCES) place estimates of the national home schooling population to be approximately 1.1 million students, equaling 2.2% of the United States student population enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grades (Viadero, 2004). However, other researchers suggest that the home schooling population is between 1.1 and 2.4 million children (Maresch, 2006). Statistics from the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) and the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), two conservative, Christian home schooling advocacy groups, project the home schooling population to be greater than NCES estimates, and these groups believe home schooling is growing at a rate of 15% to 20% annually (Bauman, 2001).

Either estimate indicates that the home schooling population surpasses the total student population in the New Jersey public school system, the 10<sup>th</sup> largest student population in the country (Pawles, 2001). Stated in another manner, there are more home schooled students nationwide than the combined public school populations in Alaska, Hawaii, Vermont, Rhode Island, Delaware, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, New Hampshire, and Montana (Cloud & Morse, 2001). While U.S. Census Bureau information has helped to provide general parameters regarding the size of the population, such information does not provide data on demographic or racial breakdowns of home schooling families as NCES indicates the sample sizes have not been large enough to make such predictions (Archer, 1999; Sampson, 2005).

Certainly though the number of home schooled students according to home school expert Patricia Lines (1998) is steadily increasing, and she attributes this increase to the fact that home schooling has gained a higher profile and is proving to be successful. NCES statistics tend to support this claim as the home schooling rate or percentage of

students being home schooled has grown from an estimated 1.7% in 1999 to 2.2% in 2003 (Viadero, 2004).

### ***Home Schooling Abroad***

Lines further suggests home schooling is becoming more popular abroad. “Home-schooling has been growing all over the world. Whenever people think public education is missing something, they’ll turn to another option” (as quoted in Neufeld & McMenamain, 2004, p. 1B). For the past 10 years HSLDA lawyer Christopher Klicka has been visiting such countries as Canada, Japan, Germany, and South Africa in order to assist parents in establishing home schooling organizations modeled after those in the United States and to help parents become better home schooling advocates. As in the early 1970s and 1980s in the United States, many foreign countries do not have laws regarding home schooling, and those countries which have legalized home schooling often have burdensome regulations (Zehr, 2006).

### ***What is Home Schooling?***

Presently, there is little consensus within the grass roots networks and state agencies in regard to the definition of home schooling. Stacy Bielick, Kathryn Chandler, and Stephen Broughman (2001) define home schooling as those students whose parents reported them being schooled at home instead of at a public school. If they were enrolled in a public or private school, their time did not exceed 25 hours per week. Brian Ray (1997) of HSLDA defines home schooling as a learning situation in which children spend the majority of their day in their home in lieu of attending a conventional institution of learning. George Pawles (2001) and other researchers have defined home schooling as a learning/teaching situation in which children/teenagers/young adults spend the majority

of a regular school day in or near their home instead of attending a conventional school. The basic theme among all home schooling definitions is the fact that it is the education of school aged children under the direct oversight of parents (Lines, 1998).

### ***Who Home Schools?***

Originally, when the home schooling movement began in the early 1970s, it was seen as practiced by “Woodstock Generation” hippies and radical religious fundamentalists. However, over time the characteristics of families drawn to home schooling have become more diverse. Although families with strong, religious convictions turned to home schooling in the late 1970s and early 1980s to pursue a more religiously-based education for their children, these families included not only conservative Christians, but also Jews, Catholics, and a myriad of other religiously oriented groups (Lyman, 1998). Today, there is growing evidence that the stereotypical ideal of the isolated, home schooling family of the 1970s and early 1980s no longer applies, as the home schooling movement appears to be broadening to include a wide range of families seeking an alternative educational experience for their children (Gewertz, 2001; Romanowski, 2001).

Certainly, no one characteristic precisely defines all home schoolers, and no two families resemble one another exactly. As Cheryl Seelhoff (2000) suggests, “Home schooling is going to be different for every family, for every parent, for every child. There are no one-size-fits-all formulas or solutions; families must always work out their own solutions in the context of their own unique lives” (p. 2). Nonetheless, a set of beliefs underlies the home schooling movement. Parents who home school their children seek to make the home a focal point for a child’s moral and cognitive development.

Home schooling parents believe this form of instruction allows children the freedom to pursue their natural desires and that living and learning are not two separate entities. As Isabel Lyman (1998) suggests, “home schoolers believe that the student who receives his instruction simultaneously from the home and community at large will be a more culturally sophisticated child than the one the bulk of whose learning experiences is confined to a school” (p. 3). It is the home schooling family’s contention that their children will learn more and learn better at home than they would if instruction occurred primarily at school.

### ***Alternative Choice of Education***

By exercising the choice to home school, home schooling parents are selecting the type of education their children receive. This choice, they believe, is protecting their children from becoming one of the statistics of academic or moral failure sometimes portrayed in the popular media (Klicka, 1998). As home schooling parent Stephen Holtrop (1996) states, “Our values - though they may differ somewhat from those of our neighbors, professional colleagues, or fellow church members – are important to us, and we wish to maximize the chances of our children embracing those values” (p. 75). Home schooling families want the right to choose to teach their children themselves, as it is the home schooling family’s belief that they can provide a better academic and moral foundation for their children than other school settings (Cloud & Morse, 2001). Home schooling families see the family as superior to any other educational institution in society. Their choice to home school is both a developmental philosophy and a political response to existing educational institutions and contemporary social order.

Home schooling has been viewed by society with distrust. Past Gallup polls indicate that a majority of Americans disapproved of home schooling (Home Schooling Families Grow in Number and Diversity, 2000); however, more recent Gallup polls suggest a change in public attitudes. The 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll indicates that growing numbers of Americans support providing home schoolers with such services as special education, extracurricular activities, driver's education, and allowing home school teachers the opportunity to participate in local public school professional development (Rose & Gallop, 1999). A 2007 poll conducted by Education Next also suggests a similar trend as the survey indicates that 40% of the American public knows a home schooling family. Of these individuals who are acquainted with a home schooler approximately 70% believe home schoolers should have the option to attend selected classes at public schools, and 60% believe home schooled students should be able to participate in extracurricular and sports activities at their local public schools (Howell & West, 2007). As home schooling has become more popular and more visible to the public, it has become a more acceptable education alternative in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Overview of Home Schooling**

### ***Historical Background***

Historically, home schooling is not a recent concept in the realm of American education. Home-based learning was often the only education available to colonial children and the early pioneers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. With the expansion of our country into new and unpopulated areas, parents had to assume the primary responsibility for educating their children, a condition which existed well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Families



who could afford to either hire tutors to teach their children at home or sent them to private schools or boarding schools.

While some public schools did exist during the colonial period, they were basically established for children of the less affluent classes and were intended to save these children's souls through religious instruction and teaching them a profitable trade. Essentially, education in colonial America was hierarchical, class bound, and uneven in terms of opportunity. Schools remained subordinate to the family, the community, and in many instances religion (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). This began to change as state and federal legislation exerted increasing control over the education of children in this country.

***Compulsory attendance laws.***

Compulsory attendance laws were first instituted in Massachusetts in 1647 when a Massachusetts' court enacted the "Old Deluder Satan Act" that established the development of town schools. The law espoused that "Satan" was a master of deception, who kept people from learning the true knowledge of scripture. Since church and local elders feared that their teachings would not survive, the law required towns of 50 or more families to establish schools to teach writing, reading, and Bible study in order to prevent "Satan" from succeeding in the battle for the souls of men, women, and children. By 1671 all New England colonies had adopted such laws except Rhode Island. These laws were motivated more by religious and political reasons and less by educational aims; however, the law in Massachusetts set the stage for further development of the public school system (Gittins, 1990).

In 1852 the first “modern” compulsory attendance law was instituted in Massachusetts and was based on educational aims which were rooted in a variety of state concerns. Children were to be taught to read, write, compute, and be a productive member of society (Gordon & Others, 1994). This change in the law was social and political rather than religious and shifted children’s education from the home to public schools. The law was also designed to acculturate European immigrants, eliminate truancy, and reduce abuses of child labor; failure to comply with compulsory attendance laws could result in criminal penalties for parents.

Following the Civil War, compulsory education laws became more wide spread. Increasingly, states began to preempt what was traditionally viewed as parental discretion or parental right to control the process of their children’s education. States enacted compulsory attendance laws which were far reaching forms of state regulation requiring all children of appropriate age to attend either a public school or an approved non-public school. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all northern states had adopted statutes for compulsory school attendance; southern states followed this trend more slowly. Eventually, all states adopted some form of compulsory attendance laws by 1918. Compulsory attendance laws survived legal challenges in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, thus confirming the states’ legitimate authority or responsibility to educate children and reducing parental choice in education (Klicka, 1998).

### ***Shifting responsibilities***

With the beginning of the factory system in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, families themselves underwent basic changes. Families became more isolated from the larger community as production tasks shifted and families abandoned their agrarian roots to relocate to the

cities. Men worked away from home in commerce, business, factories, and mines.

Women became the prime source of child nurture as well as the home guardian of social morality, but the public increasingly saw children as requiring additional protection and nurture, causing families to turn to the public schools for help (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991). Educators of this common school generation agreed that schools were to provide the moral character of the new republic as educational responsibility continued the shift from home to the public schools. The public appeared to support this concept viewing schools as an extension of the family rather than an instrument of state authority.

With the establishment of public schools, the public's perception about informal and home-based education began to change, and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century school education was not only compulsory but popular. Joseph Kirschner (as cited in Van Galen & Pitman, Chapter 7, 1991) indicates that political, economic, social, and religious factors all contributed to the common school movement as the central objective of compulsory education was the concept of Americanization. Such faith in the public schools was closely tied to efforts to forge a unified national identity, prompting reactions toward certain immigrant families and ways of life that some viewed as "un-American." Attempts were made to remove through schooling "undesirable characteristics" from immigrant families and their children so as to remedy the "ills" of the lower class (Knowles, 1988). Public schooling, therefore, became not only a right, but a responsibility, as civic leaders and government officials promoted public education as a way to shape a virtuous and unified citizenry.

This ongoing shift in educational responsibility in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century continued the erosion of family control and authority over children's education. This shift allowed

the state the right to instill values deemed desirable by political elites. Compliance was fueled by a desire for the social status conferred by schools and the belief that an education provided opportunities for economic advancement. Schools were to foster the public good and prepare individuals for success in life. Progressive educators in this era believed that education should be preparing students to be future members of society. Over time, this concept led to class-specific educational goals in which students learned what would be vocationally and socially relevant to them as perceived by professional educators and educational reformers. As power continued to shift from the parents to professional educators, a growing criticism arose that the public schools were separating families from their communities, as well as parents from their children (Mayberry, Knowles, Ray & Marlow, 1995).

### ***Disillusionment.***

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the American school system reflected the structure of a modern capitalist society. Schools became more hierarchical and bureaucratic as well as more efficient through the professionalization of school administrations (Val Galen & Pitman, 1991). The purpose of education changed from teaching common moral elements important for all citizens to a curriculum that was more diversified, reflecting an economic purpose for education. Wayne Urban and Jennings Wagoner (1996) point out that the Depression and two world wars did little to change American education. Yet, several publications in the late 1940s and early 1950s continued to echo the gap between family and school. Bernard Bell's *Crisis in Education* and Arthur Bestor's *Educational Wastelands* suggested that the public schools had taken over the domestic functions of parents, further limiting their influence over their children's moral and cognitive

development. According to these critics, education was being controlled by a powerfully entrenched “interlocking directorate” of education professors and school administrators that controlled the operation of schools and the training of future professionals.

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century disillusionment with the public school system had broadened. Events such as the Cold War, the 1957 launching of the Soviet satellite Sputnik, and school desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s contributed (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991) to an era of educational reform. Such reform centered on finding panaceas for various crises encompassing social and educational issues, although the curriculum, structure of school governance, teacher training, classroom teaching practices, and other policies and practices remained largely unchanged. Schools were criticized for their failure to emphasize intellectual growth, rigorous thinking, and failure to ensure discipline and the social development of children (Mayberry et al., 1995). The public school system was increasingly being viewed as ineffective, inefficient, and potentially harmful to children. By the 1970s the belief that public schools could shape a virtuous citizenry was slowly evaporating (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991).

When educational reforms appeared to fail, some parents in the 1970s turned to an alternative to public schooling – home schooling. Many of these families embraced home schooling after U.S. Supreme Court decisions and congressional actions on school funding restricted the role of religion in classrooms nationwide (Halle, 2002). As these students began leaving the public schools to be home schooled, Lyman (1998) points to the emergence of two different strains of home schooling – a religious-thread inspired by Raymond Moore, a former missionary and employee of the U.S. Department of Education, and a countercultural-left thread espoused by John Holt, an author and

proponent of school reform in the 1960s. Despite the differences between these two strains, their concerns caused families to choose to home school rather than send their children to conventional schools. These concerns included a desire for a religiously based education, fears about crime and lack of discipline in the public schools, frustrations with bureaucratic inefficiencies, distrust about the quality of education afforded children, and the belief that children could be better educated at home by their parents. Many of these concerns resonate with the concerns of contemporary home schoolers. NCES indicates that nearly half of today's home schooling parents choose to either exit or not enroll in the public school system because they are concerned about the quality of education their children receive and a little over one-third want to provide their children with religiously based and/or moral education (Gerwertz, 2001).

### **Legal and Legislative Responses to Home Schooling**

#### ***National***

Prior to 1982 only 2 states -- Utah (1957) and Nevada (1965) -- had laws which recognized home schooling as an option available to parents. However, by 1986 most states had adopted some form of legislation recognizing home schooling, and by 1989 only 3 states -- Iowa, North Dakota, and Michigan -- considered home schooling illegal. By 1993 home schooling was legal in all 50 states. James Cibulka (as cited in Van Galen & Pitman, Chapter 5, 1991) points out that home schooling families and advocates have been very successful in reshaping state laws and regulations in regard to home schooling. While the phenomenon of home schooling began as an educational movement, it has turned into a political movement. In approximately a 10 year period, home schooling families' direct actions have brought about favorable changes in state laws through legal

challenges and new legislation (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991). Although courts have consistently reaffirmed the states' right to regulate the education of children within its jurisdiction, the courts have also acknowledged the rights of parents to home school their children.

***Right to home school.***

While the right of the state to require education under their constitutions is an accepted legal judgment, the extent to which that right may be exercised is not free of limitations or controversy (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991). Several serious challenges to compulsory attendance laws in the 1920's were reviewed by the United States Supreme Court in *Meyer v. Nebraska (1923)*, *Farrington v. Tokushige (1927)*, and *Pierce v. the Society of Sisters (1925)*. Although the Supreme Court has never explicitly ruled on home schooling (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991), these cases set the stage for the type of issues considered in subsequent legal actions involving home schoolers. In each case the Court balanced the power of the state and parental interests by protecting parental rights to determine the nature of education for their children while preserving the authority of the state to require, regulate, and control the education of its youth. These rulings established a constitutional basis for home schooling; subsequent claims of parental interest in their children's education obligated states to develop policies that would both protect those rights and ensure the protection of the state's children in educational matters.

Actual litigation on the legality of home schooling began in the early 1970s focusing on the states' authority to regulate private alternatives to public education. Home schooling parents and advocacy groups asserted the family's right to take control of their children's education rather than acquiesce to the state's power. The state's right

to control the education of children is well founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the United States Constitution and the common law doctrine of *parens patriae*, in which the state maintains the sovereign power of guardianship over all persons. Such guardianship gives the state the authority to protect every individual who is not legally competent to act in his or her best interest; this custodial relationship applies to young children who cannot provide for themselves (Henderson, Golanda, & Lee, 1991).

Today, home schooling regulation is dependent upon state statutes and relevant case law comprised of state court decisions interpreting compulsory attendance laws based on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and sometimes the 9<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the United States Constitution (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991). Two areas of home schooling court cases have emerged in relation to the compulsory attendance laws and states' sovereign power of guardianship: equivalency of education and the free exercise of religion. While the implications of cases that guarantee the right to free exercise of religion are relatively similar across states with states either explicitly acknowledging this right or not in education, those that address equivalency vary widely. Provisions determining equivalence or compliance with compulsory education laws vary by state, including provisions regarding instructor qualifications, required length of time for the school day or year, how each state regulates parental registration to obtain approval to home school, the state's monitoring of home schooled students, and whether the state requires home schooled students to participate in standardized testing (Zirkel & Gluckman, 1983). These rulings and regulations have facilitated the nature of home schooling across the nation, and such rulings have shaped a state's ability to strike a balance between parental



interests in directing the upbringing of the child and the government's interest in ensuring an educated citizenry (McCarthy, 1992).

When challenged, state policy has been consistently moving in the direction of more relaxed regulation toward home schooling (Ramsey, 1992). If state compulsory attendance statutes were not clear or were too restrictive, the courts have generally ruled in favor of home schooling families, citing such statutes as unconstitutional, and thus making home schooling an explicit exception to compulsory education. On the other hand, federal and state courts also have upheld demands states have placed on home schoolers ruling in favor of the states' right to regulate education within its borders by imposing reasonable regulations for the control and duration of children's education (Henderson et al., 1991).

### ***Home Schooling Regulations.***

Much of the home schooling literature focuses on this balance between parent interests in directing the upbringing of the child and the state's interest in ensuring an educated citizenry. Nonetheless, conservative Christian home schooling advocacy organizations like NHERI and HSLDA believe that there will be more pressure nationally and statewide to closely scrutinize and regulate home schooling as the number of home schooling families increase (Ray, 1997). For example families belonging to NHERI and HSLDA express concern that their parental rights may be eroding slowly with each attempt to comply with existing local and state regulations. Some families believe that such regulations are harmful to their children's educational progress and choose not to register with their local school districts. HSLDA and NHERI further espouse that lower court rulings are elevating the power of the state to supersede that of the parents. As Mike

Smith of HSLDA contends, “The fight is no longer to legalize home schooling, but to protect home school freedom from further governmental control while continuing to push for more freedom” (Longbottom, 2007, p. 1).

Nevertheless, home schooling regulation is dependent upon state statutes and relevant case law, and these differing regulations emphasize the broad range of state statutes that presently govern home schooling. With the differences between state statutes and the wide range of judicial interpretations concerning home schooling, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to generalize across state and jurisdictional boundaries in order to develop consistent guidelines for the implementation of home schooling regulations (Gordon & Others, 1994).

### ***Home Schooling in Maryland***

Maryland, according to HSLDA, is considered a moderate state for home schooling regulation. Only Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Vermont include options in their home schooling regulations for families to obtain religious exemptions from compulsory laws. Maryland and Tennessee are the only two states which give home schooling families the option to be supervised by churches or church schools instead of their local public schools (Klicka, 1998).

Maryland requires parents to complete a “Notification” form approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) with their local board of education similar to 41 other states. Maryland provides parents with two options in regard to monitoring home school students’ progress. Option A allows parents to seek student monitoring through their local public school system. Home schooled students according to COMAR 13A.10.01.01D.(1-3) (Appendix A) must submit a portfolio of work

demonstrating “regular, thorough instruction during the school year in studies usually taught in schools to children the same age.” This includes English, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, health, and physical education. The regulation stipulates that the family must notify their local school superintendent within 15 days of starting a home school. Upon filing the “Notification” form the family agrees to comply with the regulation’s requirements, indicate whether the child will participate in standardized testing, advise what form of review the family will undergo, and verify continuation of home schooling annually with their local school superintendent.

If the designee of the local school district determines that after reviewing the student’s portfolio the quality of work does not conform to the state’s instructional program, the family is notified of the deficiencies. The family is given 30 days to provide evidence that the deficiency is remedied or the family must cease home schooling and the student must return to their public school for instruction.

Maryland’s Option B, the church umbrella option, does not involve state supervision or oversight by the local school district. To qualify an umbrella group must be operated by a bona fide church organization as defined by the state. Attendance and subjects taught are prescribed by the supervising program. Although church umbrella groups are to provide enrolled home schooling families with pre-enrollment conferences, textbook and lesson plan reviews, an annual visit to site of instruction, and periodic telephone conferences, there is no state tracking to determine compliance. To date there are approximately 250 such umbrella groups throughout Maryland.

*Unresolved issues in Maryland.*

Maryland makes no provisions for home schoolers to participate in dual enrollment, extracurricular activities, or any type of educational assistance even though these concepts are gaining momentum across the country. As home schooling parents nationwide begin to press for access to public school-based opportunities, MSDE officials may face similar requests and find it necessary to consider re-evaluating the state's home schooling regulations. The average turnover rate for a child being home schooled is 2 years (Lines, 1998), indicating that parents tend to move children in and out of the public school system as they search for an appropriate education for their children. According to the Department of Legislative Services, the number of Maryland home school students has increased almost nine times since 1990 from approximately 2,296 to 24,329 in the 2005-2006 school year (Fiscal Policy Note, 2007). That growth combined with the likelihood that home schooled students will return to the public schools at some point creates an opportunity, if not a necessity, for greater collaboration between the public schools and the home schooling population in Maryland.

An example of the mounting pressure for greater collaboration is the increasing number of home school parents fighting for the right to have their children participate on public school sports teams. In the last 5 years several bills have been introduced in the Maryland General Assembly to allow home school athletes to participate on public school teams. These bills were defeated due to opposition from state and local school boards who were concerned about how to determine eligibility and comply with equity regulations governing school sports. It is also the belief of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association that the very first criteria for representing a

school on a school team is that the student attends that school (Jacobson, 2003). While sports bills continue to be defeated in Maryland, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is dropping a cumbersome process for home schoolers to apply for athletic scholarships. The NCAA believes more home schoolers will be participating in college sports (Gehring, 2004), further blurring the distinction between receiving an education at home and an education in the public school system.

### **Purpose of Study**

#### ***Overall Purpose***

While past literature on home schooling gleaned from studies, newspapers, and magazine articles has presented an historical outline of the movement and a litany of families' reasons to home school (Lyman, 1998), the literature has not thoroughly examined the concept of a family's choice to home school as it is affected by individual state statutes and social conditions -- the framework within which families make their choice to educate their children. This concept of choice means that the social phenomena results from the actions of individual human actors' directed by their beliefs, goals, meanings, values, prohibitions, and scruples within an environment of specific schooling options (Heath, 1976).

Since states vary from no regulations to more stringent regulations, Gregory Cizek suggests, "that researchers should try examining home schoolers more on their own terms" (as quoted in Archer, 1999, p. 7); therefore, it is important to study home schooling families in regard to their values and the choices available to them within specific social and institutional frameworks. While Maryland's two monitoring options are somewhat distinctive as compared to other states, it provides a unique opportunity to

examine and consider why some home schooling families decide to work directly with the state and their local school officials by choosing Option A, even though some of these families home school for religious reasons.

My study will focus on the home schooling population residing in a public school system within the Baltimore-Washington-Northern Virginia Combined Statistical Area (CSA). When I was serving an internship in this particular public school system, the director of home schooling told me that about one-third or approximately 300 home school families in the target school system choose Option A. Of those families, some home school for religious reasons. This tends to run counter to the literature and conventional wisdom. It suggests that some families that home school for religious reasons desire interactions with their public schools and may include a desire for additional curricular and extracurricular support. Thus, it becomes important as Cizek suggests (as cited in Archer, 1999) to examine and evaluate the changing needs of this group on their own terms.

### ***Research Questions***

Home schooling families generally believe that the personal choice to educate children involves personal freedoms and the notion of a constitutional right to home school with little or no government interference. Families have mounted a political movement in order to legalize home schooling in all 50 states, and as a result of these legislative and court battles, sensitive issues have been raised in regard to the appropriate balance between parental choice in directing the education of children and *parens patriae* or governmental interests in ensuring an educated citizenry (McCarthy, 1992).

Maryland’s home schooling regulations offer parents two distinct choices for student monitoring. For either option parents must receive permission to home school from the their local school superintendent by registering with a simple MSDE approved “Notification” form requesting the child’s name, gender, address, grade, local public school, date of birth, type of monitoring plan, and interest in participating in standardized testing. Therefore, to understand better a parent’s choice to home school within the social and institutional framework of the public school system, my study will focus on the following questions:

1. What are the reasons Maryland home schooling families choose Option A?  
Why do some religiously motivated families choose Option A?
2. What services do Maryland home schooling families want made available to them through their local public school system?

**Table 1: Research Questions and Methods of Inquiry**

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Type of Inquiry</b>	<b>Data Used</b>
Question 1	Qualitative	Analyze data from study questionnaire and interviews with home schooling families
Question 2	Qualitative	Analyze data from study interviews with home schooling families

***Research Design***

Since no research has focused directly on Maryland home schooling families and the choices and concerns they have in regard to home schooling, my inquiry will be exploratory and utilize the case study method. This method as defined by Robert Yin (2003) is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its

real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Sharan Merriam (1998) further emphasizes that case study “is an intensive description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system which provides an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p. 19).

Case study research lends itself to my investigation because, as Yin (2003) argues case studies arise out of “the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (p. 2). Thus, I am attempting to study home schooling by analyzing this complex contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context over which I have no control and on their terms. Using several methods of collecting data such as a questionnaire distributed to the target population and personal interviews with home schooling families, I will be working inductively from the evidence found in the research setting while keeping an open mind and deferring analysis until the evidence is sufficiently comprehensive to develop a theory.

### *Qualitative.*

Qualitative research is appropriate for this study as I am attempting to capture the perspective of home schooling families through in-depth interviewing in order to allow families to answer from their own frame of reference. As John Creswell (1998) suggests, it is based on “distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). Through a wide-angle lens view of the phenomenon, I am examining behavior as it



occurs naturally in all of its detail and its many dimensions and layers of behavior (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 19).

To begin the study and to ascertain general characteristics about the target home schooling population, a simple questionnaire will be developed and distributed to these families at their child's January/February 2007 portfolio review. This information will provide a general overview of Option A families such as their reasons to home school, number of children being home schooled, and participation in home schooling organizations. It will also assist in identifying a cross-section of home schooling families to participate in the interview process.

Qualitative data gathered through interviews with families from Option A will provide me with an opportunity to delve into and describe the complexity and multi-dimensions of family choice made within the social and institutional constraints available to families (See Table 1, question 2). Interview questions will ask families to describe their home schooling experiences in their own words and from their lived experience as in-depth interviews will allow the subject to answer from their own frame of reference yielding thick, rich descriptions of home schooling. As Kadriye Ercikan and Wolff-Michael Roth (2006) stress, "The approach of qualitative studies is to produce thick description" (page 15), and as Joseph Ponterotto (2006) further suggests, "Thick description refers to the researcher's task of both describing and interpreting observed social action (or behavior) within its particular context" (page 543).

#### ***Research Site.***

No study has focused on Maryland's home schooling statute nor on the Maryland home schooling population's decision to home school within the state guidelines;

therefore, my study will focus on a target public school population that is part of the Baltimore-Washington-Northern Virginia Combined Statistical Area (CSA). This CSA is the 4<sup>th</sup> most populous CSA in the nation, and includes the counties of Baltimore, Prince George's, Anne Arundel, and Montgomery as well as Baltimore City. The target public school population from this area is identified as one of the largest public school districts in Maryland and is included in the nation's 50 largest school districts. Furthermore, the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development ([www.choosemaryland.org/factsandfigures/demographics/incomedta.html](http://www.choosemaryland.org/factsandfigures/demographics/incomedta.html)), describes this CSA is one of the wealthiest in the nation. For 2006 the target area had a median household income of \$79,950 as compared to the state's median household income of \$65,144.

This CSA has experienced tremendous population growth in the past 2 decades with a projected growth in population of 11.5% by 2010. This estimate does not take into account the recent announcement by the federal government's Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) for this area. In the next few years BRAC is estimated to bring approximately 60,000 new jobs to the state with an increase of 28,000 new households over the next 4 years. The demand for housing alone in the Ft. Meade area is expected to increase by 42% (Chick, 2007).

***Personal Interest.***

As a former private school principal, I have had the opportunity to come into contact with local home schooling families who are contemplating returning their children to a school setting. Families offer their reasons for enrolling their child in a school environment hesitantly as if being judged for not continuing to home school.

Parents describe the enormous commitment in time and energy that must be dedicated to home schooling. Some feel that they can no longer afford such a commitment while others have concerns about their ability to provide adequate academic instruction as their child enters higher grade levels. Other families indicate a desire for their child to attend a public or private high school, and believe that by transitioning the home schooled student into a small, private middle school setting, the child will be better prepared to enter a larger public or private high school.

It is often difficult for schools to evaluate these home schooled children academically since much of their academic records consist mainly of anecdotal information, letters of recommendation from other home schooling families, a listing of textbooks used, and sometimes the child's work samples contained in a portfolio. A nonpublic school's admissions testing offers a glimpse into a child's abilities; however, it is difficult to determine how that child will blend into a classroom setting after only one day of shadowing at school, especially if the child has never experienced a classroom environment. This piqued my interest in the local home schooling population.

My internship with the target public school Office of Home Schooling in the spring of 2003 helped me to cultivate a relationship with the director of that office. The director has become an excellent source of information on home schooling in the state, and, as Creswell (1998) points out, the director is "a gatekeeper [who] can provide access to the system and help the researcher establish a rapport with the case" (p. 117). Not only was the director a point of access to home schooling families in the target school system, but he was directly involved with local home school organization leaders,

church umbrella group leaders, other public school systems' directors of home schooling, and MSDE officials.

### ***Definitions.***

The following definitions will help to clarify the terms used in the research questions and in this discussion. Home schooling refers to students who are not enrolled in a public or private school and receive their educational instruction at home. COMAR 13A.10.01 (Appendix A) is the Maryland State Department of Education regulation that governs home schooling. Option A home school students are required to maintain a portfolio that demonstrates the parent or guardian is providing regular, thorough instruction during the school year in subjects specified in COMAR 13A.10.01C.(1-3). This portfolio is then reviewed by the representative of the local school system to insure that the child is receiving regular, thorough instruction in the studies usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age. Option B under COMAR 13A.10.05A.-C specifies the requirements that a parent or guardian must meet in order to home school under the supervision of a nonpublic school. This organization must be operated by a bona fide church organization and meet the provisions outlined in the aforementioned regulation.

### **Conclusion**

Public education has been viewed as a way to bring everyone together to share values and learn a common history; however, as historian David Tyack stated, "home schooling defines education not as a pursuit of an entire community but as the work of one family and its chosen circle" (as cited in Cloud & Morse, 2001). While home schooling today and home schooling of colonial times are vastly different, home

schooling is viewed by some as an activity that allows families to reproduce their culture or way-of-life by controlling the content of their child's education. Today, home schooling is attracting a broader spectrum of people than it did 30 years ago. As Ian Slatter spokesman for the National Center for Home Education stated, "There is a potential for massive growth. Home schooling is just getting started. We've gotten through the barriers of questioning the academic ability of home schools, now that we have a sizable number of graduates who are not socially isolated or awkward – they are good, high-quality citizens. We're getting that mainstream recognition and challenging the way education has been done" (as quoted in *More Students Home Schooled – Moral, Religious Issues Push Number to 1.1 Million*, 2004, p. A7).

As the home schooling population increases, possibly surpassing the number of students in such educational reform measures as charter schools and vouchers, it becomes important that educators re-evaluate their concerns about the education home schoolers are receiving. By some reports (Archer, 1999; Longbottom, 2007) school boards across the country continue to discourage parents from home schooling by subjecting them to scrutiny and misinformation about school regulations, even though court litigation has attempted to balance the rights of parents and the state. Now, it is important to examine home schooling open-mindedly rather than continue to challenge home schooling families' abilities and authority to home school. We need to better understand this educational alternative and its role as an educational alternative within states.

Joyce Reed, an associate dean of Brown University, states that home schoolers "are the epitome of Brown students. They've learned to be self-directed, they take risks, they face challenges with total fervor, and they don't back off" (as quoted in Hall, 2002,

p. 1). Endorsements, such as those offered by associate dean Reed, appear to underscore the increasing legitimacy of home schooling as an educational option for families. Home schooling is moving from being an idiosyncratic option for a handful of families to a more conventional option exercised by a sizable number of families. Many home schooling families have chosen a life that is rewarding to them, and they firmly believe in home schooling. As home schooling has grown up, so have home schoolers. They are now beginning to perpetuate the home schooling process with their own children (Lyman, 1998; Ray, 2003).

Examining a family's choice to home school, the monitoring options available to them, and their expectations for services from the local public school system may provide a clearer understanding of the phenomenon within the state. This study could help explain why the Option A monitoring plan attracts religiously motivated home schooling families. By opening a dialogue between the home schooling population, policymakers, and educators, it may be possible to identify new areas for collaboration that would open school doors to home schooling families and assist public school educators in understanding how to support these families in ways that benefit all children.

Lastly, this study may contribute to understanding better the home schooling population itself. Although home schoolers often defend the right of families to make their own choices, especially in regard to how they incorporate education, religion, and lifestyle, they share in common a goal of ensuring that their approach to education is a respected alternative to formal public instruction. By discussing these desires with home schooling families, I hope to understand better both similarities and differences in home

schooling experiences, as well as similarities and differences in the reason given for home schooling and choosing to be monitored by the public school system.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Home schooling parents see themselves as the primary role models for their children, and as Jean Halle (2002) points out, “at the heart of home schooling is quality family time” (p. 2). Home schooling families have expressed their wish to guide their children’s thinking about modern culture, and they want to pass on their values, desires, and knowledge to their children. Many do not envision home schooling as an escape from the present culture; many also do not believe that they have to embrace uncritically every aspect of American culture or what they perceive as one-size-fits-all educational programs of the public schools (Jeub, 1994).

In examining the home schooling phenomenon this chapter will analyze the legislation and court cases that have shaped home schooling practices, the origins of home schooling, shared and differing beliefs of home schooling families, and the response to home schooling by public school educators. In addition I will examine a growing trend in home schooling – namely, efforts by some home school parents to gain greater access to public school-based opportunities while still retaining control of their child’s education.

#### **Legislative and Legal Decisions Affecting Home Schooling**

##### ***U.S. Supreme Court Rulings***

Conservative Christian organizations like the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) and the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), as well as religiously motivated home schooling families, maintain a belief that they are under siege by lower court rulings and state regulations (Longbottom, 2007). They continue to affirm



their right to direct their child's education through such U.S. Supreme Court rulings as *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), and *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972). For example in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, the Supreme Court examined compulsory attendance within the framework of state regulation of non-public schools and the states' right under *parens patriae* to compel children to attend school. The Court ruled that compulsory attendance laws violated a parent's right to choose a particular school, a Roman Catholic school in this case, where children received an appropriate education and religious training. Compulsory attendance laws now had to accommodate both public and non-public schools. In *Meyer v. Nebraska* the Court ruled in favor of the rights of parents to retain control over the nature of the education their children received. In this case the Court recognized the Due Process Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment guaranteeing the fundamental right of parents to direct the education and upbringing of their children.

Another major U. S. Supreme Court case cited by home schooling advocates, *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, deals with the free exercise of religion. This case examined the right of members of the Amish Mennonite Church to refuse to send their children to public or non-public schools beyond the eighth grade. It was the contention of the Amish sect that this practice endangered the religious salvation of themselves and their children. By working on the farm, the child received the necessary skills to function within the Amish society. In the ruling Chief Justice Burger concluded that states have a responsibility for educating their citizens, as well as the right to impose reasonable regulations over education. However, he did state that the power must be balanced with parents' rights to direct their child's education in a manner that is in keeping with their religious beliefs

(Homeschooling Dealing with an Idea Whose Time Has Come, 2002). Thus, the Supreme Court narrowly defined the scope of this ruling by insisting that in order to trigger constitutional protection parental interest must be religious in nature rather than philosophical or personal. This interest must pose a real rather than a perceived threat to the religious parties involved, and the disruption to the child's education should not seriously impair the child's future nor should it threaten the public order in any significant way (Zirkel & Rubin, 1995).

Thus, the Supreme Court found an inter-dependence between Amish fundamental religious tenets and the self-sufficient Amish way of life that had been practiced over 3 centuries and concluded that it was threatened by forced attendance in secular schools. Other religious groups attempted to capitalize on this ruling by using the United States Constitution's 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to challenge compulsory attendance laws; however, courts have rejected such arguments based on the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment due to the narrow constraints in which the Supreme Court decided *Wisconsin v. Yoder*.

Although the Supreme Court has not ruled explicitly on home schooling or reviewed state laws on this issue, such a review is inevitable (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991). Many believe that reasonable regulations on home schooling families would be upheld especially if one looks to the general guidelines established in the *Wisconsin v. Yoder* case.

### ***Case Law and State Regulation***

Case law involving "equivalency of education" has been decided mostly in favor of home schoolers especially when courts employ academic instruction as the standard in determining if home schooling families are satisfying a state's interest in an educated

citizenry. There exists, however, a need for an appropriate measurement instrument in regard to assessing academic instruction, and this has been the subject of many legal battles (Gordon & Others, 1994). For example some state legislatures have relaxed their regulations concerning parental qualifications as home school instructors, and parental qualifications as prerequisites to home schooling are generally not very stringent. Some states have incorporated mandatory standardized testing into compulsory attendance laws to ensure that home schoolers are being taught skills necessary to qualify them for employment or further education. In cases arising over the curriculum content prescribed by the state, courts have customarily ruled in favor of home schooling parents who argue that they are making a bona fide attempt to comply with the law (Gordon & Others, 1994).

Many state regulations for home schoolers encompass some type of notice or approval requirement to home school, teacher qualifications, and/or student testing. The HSLDA rates each state in regard to their home schooling laws from less restrictive to highly regulated. According to HSLDA approximately 10 states presently have no requirement for home schooling parents to initiate or have any contact with their local public schools. States such as Texas and New Jersey only require home school parents to establish and operate a home school, and there are no specific teacher qualifications, notices, recordkeeping, or days of instruction required.

Fourteen states plus the District of Columbia require parent notification to home school only. Delaware, for example, provides families with two options: enroll in a home school association or establish a home school that provides “regular and thorough instruction.” The state requires attendance of 180 days and notification to the state’s

Department of Education regarding enrollment, student ages, and attendance. There are no qualifications for instructors, recordkeeping, or testing.

HSLDA deems 16 states moderate in their regulations as they require parents to notify the state of their intent to home school and to supply the state with student test scores, and/or professional evaluation of student progress. Maryland is included in this grouping. Finally, 11 states’ regulations are considered stringent as they require parent notification, achievement test scores and/or professional evaluation, curriculum approval by the state, teacher qualification for parents, and home visits by state officials.

Table 2 lists states according to their ranking by HSLDA.

**Table 2: HSLDA’s State Ratings**

<b>No regulation</b>	<b>Low Regulation</b>	<b>Moderate Regulation</b>	<b>High Regulations</b>
Alaska Connecticut Idaho Illinois Indiana Michigan Missouri New Jersey Oklahoma Texas	Alabama Arizona California Delaware District of Columbia Kansas Kentucky Mississippi Montana Nebraska Nevada New Mexico Wisconsin Wyoming	Arkansas Colorado Florida Georgia Hawaii Iowa Louisiana Maryland New Hampshire North Carolina Ohio Oregon South Carolina South Dakota Tennessee Virginia	Maine Massachusetts Minnesota New York North Dakota Pennsylvania Rhode Island Utah Vermont Washington West Virginia

The different state regulations emphasize the broad range of state statutes that govern home schooling. When states require home schoolers to receive an equivalent and thorough instructional program as in public school, there appears to be no one standard

for such an instructional program. Although educators emphasize that the government is to ensure that every child's education enables them to be productive citizens in society, there is no measurable tool across all states to assess that standard for public, private or home schooled children. Only through states requiring all students to meet national standards and attain certain standardized test results can all states be measured against one another to determine the thoroughness of their instructional programs.

### **Who Home Schools and Why**

#### ***Parental Beliefs***

Many home schooling families believe the family is superior to any other institution of society. By choosing to home school, they are exercising a political response to existing educational institutions as well as expressing their disillusionment with the contemporary social order. Noted author and educator Dr. Thomas Armstrong commented in an interview for *Home School Magazine* with Janie Bowman (1996) that:

Some people home school because they want to keep things just the way things are. Without making any value judgments, they have a tradition that they pretty much want their child to have. It may be political, religious, social, or intellectual, and they look out at the world, which is quite diverse, and they say, well, you know, my kid goes out there and he or she's going to be taken away from this tradition. So, they keep their children at home to keep them within that framework – which is not change. I think to some extent home schooling may be a reaction for some people, against the great changes that exist (p. 1).

This sentiment was reiterated by Kurt Bauman (2001) in his evaluation of home schooling trends in the United States. His findings indicate that rather than representing a definite trend toward “individual” instruction, home schooling represents an attempt by parents to reclaim a social process – to make “schooling” valuable in ways that are understandable to them through the cultural means at their disposal.

As home schooling has gained in popularity reasons for choosing home schooling have become as diverse as each participating family. Home schooling parents cite a range of reasons that influence their decisions to home school: a parent's occupation which involves international business and frequent travel, living in a rural area where schools are not readily available, a parent's own educational experience, a parent's political and religious beliefs, a parent's fondness for their children and not wanting to send them away on a school bus every morning, and a parent's rejection of a one-size-fits-all model of public schools (Lines, 1987; Hill, 1996; Seelhoff, 1999). However, despite the diversity in explanations, home schooling families continue to espouse their notion that they can do a better job at home than trained educators in conventional schools (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1998). Some families even call it an investment in their children's lives (Morris, 1999). Not only do home schooling families believe that the family is superior to any other institution in society, but they also believe that the true definition of education is the passing on of culture from the family to its younger members (Jeub, 1994).

Researchers continually cite two prominent strains in home schooling: ideological and pedagogical. These two strains of home schooling remain part of the home schooling culture today. Ideologues are considered more religiously motivated and have specific beliefs, values, and skills they want their children to learn and embrace. They do not believe the public school systems are adequate to accomplish these ends. Since their motivation to home school is religiously based, they view the public school systems as grounded in secular, humanist philosophy which does not include Christian values, and is either inadequate or hostile to their educational goals for their children. Thus, their

religious and educational beliefs are inextricably intertwined (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991).

Pedagogues, on the other hand, believe it benefits their child's academic education to be home schooled. It is their belief that the public school systems do not educate children well and they dislike the professionalization and bureaucracy of modern education (Lyman, 1998). Many turn to home schooling after observing their children suffering emotionally and/or academically in the school system, often because the school system is unable to serve what they believe to be their children's unique learning styles or scholarly needs (Van Galen, 1988).

### ***Raymond and Dorothy Moore***

Prominent early advocates of home schooling, Raymond Moore and his wife Dorothy, were identified as ideologues. Moore, a former U.S. Department of Education employee, and his wife, Dorothy, a reading specialist expert, had home schooled their own children beginning in 1944. The Moore's attempted to answer the question, "Is institutionalizing young children a sound, educational trend, and what is the best timing for school entrance?" (Lyman, 1998, p. 3) The couple analyzed over 8,000 studies of children's senses, brain cognition, and socialization, and they concluded that no evidence existed mandating children be rushed into formal education either at home or at a school.

They further concluded that developmental problems such as hyperactivity, nearsightedness, and dyslexia often occurred in children due to taxing prematurely a child's nervous system and mind with academic tasks such as reading and writing. This led to the Moore's belief that children should not receive formal education until at least the ages of 8 or 10, and possibly as late as 12. Moore stated, "These findings sparked our

concern and convinced us to focus our investigation on two primary areas: formal learning and socializing” (as quoted in Lyman, 1998, p. 4). This work and their research for the federal government and various universities led to an unexpected interest in home schooling as a way to protect young children from the potential negative effects of early schooling.

The Moore’s published several books which were written from a Christian perspective giving parents advice on how to succeed at home schooling. They advocated a firm, but gentle approach to home schooling which was termed the “Moore Formula.” This formula balanced chores, study, and work outside the home in an atmosphere geared toward a child’s particular development, interests, aptitudes, and abilities. The couple was also considered experts on home schooling and testified in behalf of home schooling families in court cases, before legislative bodies, and private organizations (Lyman, 1998).

### ***John Holt***

John Holt, on the other hand, was a leading advocate in the late 1960s and early 1970s of the “free school movement” that supported parental control and student/teacher involvement in running schools (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991). In his book *Teach Your Own* Holt (Holt, 1981) describes his efforts to reform schools so they would become places where children would be encouraged to explore and make sense out of the world in ways that most interested them. From his travels and lectures around the country on school reform, Holt realized that only a small fraction of parents, which he termed the “silent majority,” were interested in this type of school reform. By the early 1970s he concluded that people did not want to give children more freedom, choice, or self-



direction in their education, but that the school reform he advocated could never be achieved because schools were doing exactly what the majority of people wanted them to do and were doing it very well.

Holt argued that most adults and parents distrusted children and were not ready to transform schools into places where children could learn what they most wanted to know instead of what adults thought they ought to know. He categorized this group of adults as “disadvantaged.” Holt believed that these adults feel powerless to change the way schools operate, but, believe, nonetheless, that their children will succeed because of the education they receive in their schools (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991). According to Holt, these beliefs prevented any meaningful reforms of educational institutions in the country and required a more radical response.

Holt viewed schools as institutions that categorized and sorted children according to test scores (Farenga, 2002), and eventually, Holt concluded that the best way to educate children was home schooling. His philosophy was considered by some educators as a *laissez faire* approach to home-based education emphasizing that his book *Teach Your Own* was a direct assault on the Deweyian tradition of “the individual acting to assure the educational good of all” (Van Galen & Pitman, 1991, p. 121). As a pedagogue he espoused that “the full growth of an individual is incompatible with any form of institutional control built on community consensus” (as quoted in Van Galen & Pitman, 1991, p. 123) and his followers categorized this concept as “unschooling.” As one follower concluded:

What is most important and valuable about the home as a base for children’s growth into the world is not that it is a better school than the schools but that it isn’t school at all. It is not an artificial place, set up to make “learning” happen and in which nothing except “learning” ever happens. It is a natural, organic,

central, fundamental human institution, one might easily and rightly say the foundation of all other human institutions (Lyman, 1998, p. 4).

Parents who supported Holt's idea of home-based education began removing their children from public schools or not enrolling them. In the early years of the home schooling movement these families did find themselves somewhat isolated in society as there were no established support groups or home schooling organizations as presently exist today to assist them with the daunting task of educating their children. These families were unaware that other families across the country were home schooling, as each family was basically inventing their own individual curriculum in isolation. Home schooling families faced opposition from neighbors and family who believed home schooling to be "un-American" since home schoolers were viewed as turning their backs on the democratic institutions of America (Somerville, 2001).

As home schooling families began corresponding with Holt concerning their individual home schooling experiences, he decided to publish a bimonthly newsletter in 1977 for home schooling families entitled *Growing Without Schooling*. This newsletter allowed families scattered across the country to communicate with one another, and it served as a tool for home schooling families to network and share their home schooling experiences with one another.

As early as 1983 Holt suggested the concept of forming partnerships between home schooling families and public schools recommending school districts open classes to home schoolers. He even designed a model home schooling law in which each state would specifically authorize school districts to enroll home schooled students in various classes and activities, thus allowing districts to collect state and federal aid to which they

would be entitled. His proposed legislation has never been passed in any state, although some school districts are forging local partnerships with home schoolers and allowing dual enrollment.

Both the Moores and Holt worked tirelessly to educate a skeptical public about the benefits of home schooling children, and this was a difficult task since home schooling was not recognized in most states in the 1960s and 1970s. However, they urged individual families to reclaim the responsibility for the education of their children much like the pre-industrial era in which the American family worked and learned together rather than apart. Home schooling seemed to be a return to that era (Lyman, 1998).

As families followed the Moores and Holt's advice to home school, they had to be cognizant of home schooling regulations in their particular state. Depending on state laws, home schooling families could be accused of criminal truancy by public school officials and subject to prosecution. Educators in prosecuting home schooling families believed they were protecting children from harm. They did not believe parents could teach basic academic subjects as well as trained professionals (Somerville, 2001). Prosecuting home schooling families, however, proved costly to school districts as the state courts tended to rule in favor of home schooling families (Henderson et al., 1991).

### ***Conservative Christian Home Schooling Families***

In the early 1980s the most vocal and possibly the best politically organized home schooling families tended to be religiously motivated, conservative Christians. This majority of home schooling families believed our society was experiencing moral decay; their educational focus was on the Bible and the teaching of religious history in order to instill their religious beliefs and values in their children. These parents were concerned

with the family's right to take control of their children's education rather than following the common law doctrine of *parens patriae*. It was this group that helped to provide the impetus for many home schooling network efforts across the United States, the establishment of conservative, Christian organizations like HSLDA and NHERI, and the creation of a cottage industry for curricular materials including internet resources and support networks (Gordon & Others, 1994).

### ***Mainstream Home Schoolers***

Home schooling today, however, is becoming a more accepted education alternative as the home schooling movement moves more toward the mainstream of our society attracting an array of professionals as well as a cross-section of middle-of-the-road suburbanite families (Reich, 2002). The emerging home schooling family is not motivated by religious doctrine but by more practical concerns about academic achievement and the quality of educational experiences being offered in public schools (Cloud & Morse, 2001). Their concerns include violence in schools, poor academic quality, overzealous peer pressure, the teaching of conflicting values, financial constraints within the school system, and exposure of students to certain health risks. These parents believe home schooling provides more rigorous standards and one-on-one teaching conditions which generally motivate children to learn better, and, therefore, ensure academic achievement. In addition parents of special needs students, including not only handicapped and learning disabled, but gifted children as well, believe home schooling provides a more appropriate program for their children than public schools which are plagued by dwindling financial and personnel resources.

Scott Somerville (2001) describes several very different groups entering the home schooling movement who have differing political outlooks yet are turning to home schooling in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His first group, “soccer moms,” consists of suburban mothers of school aged children not locked into any political party, but they have witnessed the successful results of home schooling via the media and are willing to attempt it. This group may not continue their home schooling efforts after several years, he concludes, because home schooling demands substantial dedication, considerable family cooperation, and may affect negatively the family’s daily routines, activities, and responsibilities. Even home schoolers admit that home schooling is not for everyone (Hill, 1996).

Somerville’s next group is Roman Catholic families who believe Catholic schools are becoming more like secular schools. Since the late Pope John Paul II responded favorably to home schooling, a change has occurred in the Church’s attitude, and the reaction to home schooling by parish priests has become positive especially since home schooled children make their presence known by attending week day masses with their mothers.

African-American home schoolers are his last group. In Somerville’s opinion home schooling may be more conflictual for them as these families face opposition from within their own community. Their grandparents remember the years of struggle to gain entrance into the public schools for their children. As one North Carolina home schooling parent explained, “Some educators and families think that because Blacks fought hard to get equal access, we shouldn’t abandon it” (as quoted in Fulbright, 2006, p. 3). Eric Burgess, founder of the National Black Home Educators Resource Association, reported

that some African-American parents called him and his wife “traitors” saying, “We fought to get into the schools, and you are getting out of them” (as quoted in Zehr, 2005, p. 20).

While African-American home schooling families indicate they want to continue the civil rights struggle for equal educational rights, they believe they can best do so by reclaiming their right to help their own children develop more fully and positively. It is their contention that racial integration in public schools has not always worked to their benefit (Aizenman, 2000). Some African-American middle class families have found that local public and private schools have failed to provide their children with a decent education or a sense of their African-American identity, and parents are concerned about this pattern of underachievement for their children throughout the county. One parent described this realization as a “wake-up call”, causing African-American parents to withdraw their children from the public schools for academic and religious reasons (Aizenman, 2000).

Ed Collom (2005) argues that minority home schooling families are often motivated to home school because of their criticism of the public schools. They tend to view public schools as part of a larger system that has subordinated them and subjected their children to discrimination. Originally, it was believed African-Americans engaging in home schooling represented only about 2% of the national home school population; however, new statistics indicate that this home schooling population is now estimated to make up 16% of the total national home schooling population (Marech, 2006; Fulbright, 2006). Collom points to the growing proportion of minority families as evidence that

home schooling families are a “heterogeneous population with varying and overlapping motivations” (p. 331).

While there is evidence of increasing numbers of home schooling minority families, a study by Tal Levy (2007), which examined the diffusion of home schooling legislation in the United States, suggests that avoiding “racial integration is a significant factor in stimulating the passage of home schooling laws” (p. 14). It is Levy’s contention that since 29 states passed legislation to legalize home schooling during the 1980s, a time in which school integration reached its highest level, there is a “correlation between racial integration and the adoption of homeschooling laws” (p. 10). Yet, Levy also indicates that recent trends in home schooling suggest a greater participation among racially underrepresented groups which tends to “alleviate the perception of racism within the movement” (p. 14), even though the motivation from some families may still be to prevent their children from interacting with children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Rather than the avoidance of integration as a major factor in the passage of home schooling laws, Bruce Cooper and John Sureau (2007) describe the home schooling movement as an example of a “grassroots political movement in education” (p. 125) to defend a family’s right to home school. They view home schooling as a movement which “united a wide range of followers, including evangelical Christians, Muslims, and New Agers, parents with gifted and special needs children, families of color, and others who do not feel that they fit easily into the standardized public education system” (p. 110).

### ***Friction Within the Home Schooling Population***

With so many differing beliefs among the various home schooling groups, these differences sometimes result in the factionalizing of the home schooling community. Only 2 decades ago individual home schooling families chose to join together collectively in order to achieve their purpose of legalizing home schooling throughout the United States. What began as an educational movement turned into a political movement as home schoolers banded together to legalize home schooling in every state. These efforts have helped shape the home schooling movement.

The home schooling movement, however, has given way to an internal struggle as some home schooling families are now experiencing difficulty supporting one another politically and pedagogically. Many families find themselves caught in the middle, not feeling comfortable aligned with either the secular or fundamentalist Christian home schoolers. Seelhoff (1999) and Helen Cordes (2000) both describe a significant change that occurred within the home schooling movement encompassing its size and political leaning.

Both describe families in the early home schooling movement as supportive of each other; however, with the rise of conservative Christian organizations such as HSLDA in the 1980s a different atmosphere prevailed. These organizations stressed the rights and obligations of parents to home school as opposed to the education of children. Cordes (2000) indicates that such organizations stressed the “importance of separation from the ‘ungodly’ ...and families were to use only Christian curriculum and avoid association with nonchristian home schoolers” (page 1). Families who were befriended by such groups were asked to sign statements of faith for membership or had to be voted



in by group leaders. Many frustrated Christian home schooling families did not feel comfortable with such exclusive groups and began establishing more inclusive groups which offered support to home schooling families with no strings attached and with no political agendas (Cordes, 2000).

Even though there are differing groups within the movement, there still remains one common thread among all home schoolers – their belief in a constitutional right to home school with a minimum of state interference. It is the daily decisions made in each home school that affect the direction of home schooling both inside and outside the home schooling community.

### **Home Schooling Surveys**

Survey findings over the past several decades indicate a developing trend. Until the 1990s the majority of families home schooled for religious and moral beliefs; however, that commanding religious majority has been slowly decreasing as home schooling families are becoming more mainstream citing academics as their main reason for home schooling. These surveys further point to the fact that parents may be more aware of and interested in services available to them by their local public school systems. Although skepticism, mainly from Christian home schooling families, still exists about such public school offerings, home schooling families in some states are beginning to move in the direction of enrolling students in various public school course offerings and taking advantage of extracurricular activities, especially participation on public school sports teams.

Table 3 compares the main findings of these surveys conducted between 1987 and 2007, and a brief summary of each study follows.

**Table 3: Various Home Schooling Survey Results**

<b>Survey</b>	<b>Reasons to Home School</b>	<b>Parent Education</b>	<b>Interest in Public School Resources</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
1987-88 Oregon Home Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 65% religious reasons</li> <li>• 22% academics</li> <li>• 11% environment not conducive to social development</li> <li>• 2% New Age beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 62% either have some college or graduated from college</li> <li>• 19% either attended graduate school or graduated</li> </ul>		Generally, have little confidence in public education, and attend church on a regular basis
1988 Study by Ray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority do so for values, morals, and philosophy</li> </ul>	Parents have attended or graduated from college		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, 3 children in household</li> <li>• Both parents actively involved in child's education</li> <li>• Have incomes above the national average</li> </ul>
1991 Ohio State Legislature Survey	Main reason was to provide a better education for their children	Parents tended to have more education than general population		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority living in 2-parent household with 3 children in family</li> <li>• Both parents actively involved in child's education</li> <li>• 70% regularly attend church</li> <li>• Average income between \$20,000-\$30,000</li> </ul>
1995 Mayberry Study		Better educated than general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 86% desire extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• 76% desire academic classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of families were white</li> <li>• 78% attend church regularly</li> </ul>

1998 Rudner Study		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 in 4 parents certified teacher</li> <li>• 88% had more formal education as compared to 50% nationwide</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 94% white</li> <li>• 98% married</li> <li>• 48% had 3 or more children</li> <li>• 77% mothers did not work outside home</li> <li>• Median income \$52,000 compared to \$36,000 nationally</li> </ul>
1999 NCES Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 49% can better educate at home</li> <li>• 38% religious reasons</li> <li>• 15% morals and character</li> <li>• 12% object to what is taught</li> <li>• 12% schools don't challenge students</li> <li>• 12% problems with school availability</li> <li>• 9% student behavior</li> <li>• 8% special needs child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% graduated from college as compared to 16% of non-home schooling families</li> <li>• 37% completed some education beyond high school as compared to 19% of non-home schooling families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38% did not know of any offerings</li> <li>• 6% used extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• 11% used text books</li> <li>• 1 in 5 home schooled students enrolled in public or private schools for some academic courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80% come from 2 parent households</li> <li>• 62% had 3 or more children</li> <li>• 75% White</li> <li>• 10% Black</li> <li>• 9% Hispanic</li> </ul>
2003 NCES Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31% school safety</li> <li>• 32% religious reasons</li> <li>• 13% special needs child</li> <li>• 16% dissatisfied with academics</li> <li>• 8% other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% have bachelor's degree</li> <li>• 22% have graduate or professional degrees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23% use resources from public schools</li> <li>• 23% were in extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>	
Education Next 2007			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% knew of a home schooling</li> </ul>	

			family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70% of those individuals were in favor of offering home schoolers more options in the public school system</li> </ul>	
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***Oregon Home Schooling Study***

The 1987-88 Oregon Home Schooling Study examined both the demographic characteristics and the religious, political, and educational attitudes of home schooling families. It identified four different groups of home schooling families: those home schooling for religious reasons who oppose the secular orientation of public schools and urge parents to control education by focusing on the Bible; those home schooling for academic reasons believing public schools did not address the special needs of children and perceiving home schooling as a means of providing more rigorous standards and motivation for children’s learning; those families influenced by Moore who believed public schools could not provide a learning environment conducive to the social development of children and wanted to restore family unity by being more involved in their children’s education; and New Age oriented families who believed public schools were not equipped to provide cultural beliefs and values consistent with their New Age philosophy of a peaceful coexistence with others.

As compared to the general population these families were: better educated, more economically secure, living in small residential areas, more conservative than the national population, and more likely to attend church on a regular basis. They believed society

was experiencing moral decay, and their choice to home school not only reflected their distaste for public schools, but disenchantment with the contemporary social order.

### ***1988 Study***

In attempting to synthesize current research available on home schooling at that time, Brian Ray (1988) reviewed national and statewide studies done between 1983 and 1987. His findings concluded that the majority of families home school for religious reasons believing that the education of children is primarily the responsibility of and the right of parents. While no one characteristic defined home schoolers, a family's approach to home schooling ranged from highly structured to unstructured; however, home schooling families were extremely interested in and concerned about the total education of their children.

### ***Ohio State Legislature Survey***

A 1991 state survey of Ohio home schoolers conducted by the state legislature found some similarities to the research findings reported by Ray and Maralee Mayberry. The main reason cited for home schooling was to provide a better education for their children. Home schooling families tended to have more education than the general population and had an average income between \$20,000-\$30,000. Occupations varied from professional to blue collar with more wage earners in professional jobs.

### ***1995 Survey***

Mayberry (Mayberry et al., 1995) conducted a 1995 survey in Washington, Utah, and Nevada. Similar to her 1987-88 Oregon study, she found that many of the home schooling families were skeptical of large scale social institutions believing that home schooling was one way to maintain family autonomy. In this survey families were asked

if they would be interested in pursuing various resources from their local public schools. Their responses indicated no interest in pursuing resources from their public schools as they believed such support only encourages more government control. One respondent said, “I don’t want any services from public schools because I don’t want any obligation to the public school system” (as quoted in Mayberry et al., 1995, p. 70).

However, some respondents indicated they had no knowledge of any such services and others indicated they might be willing to utilize such services, but did not know what was available to them. When asked what resources families might need or want, 86% indicated a desire for their children to participate in extracurricular activities offered by public schools, and 76% wanted their children to be able to enroll in academic offerings.

### ***1998 National Survey***

One of the largest home schooling surveys ever conducted was completed in 1998 by Lawrence Rudner (Rudner, 1998). He utilized the mailing list of the Bob Jones University to survey over 11,900 families from all 50 states who participated in achievement testing at the university. Rudner’s findings were similar to prior studies cited indicating that home schooling families possess a strong commitment to education and their children with the majority home schooling for religious reasons. The study revealed only 11% of home schooled students were being home schooled through high school, and he attributed this to the newness of the phenomenon and/or a desire by parents to stop home schooling their children when they reached high school age.

Academically, 1 of every 4 home schooled students had a parent who was a certified teacher; children who were home schooled their entire life did better

academically than those home schooled for only a few years; student performance nationwide varied according to parental income levels; and students living in households with greater income performed better academically than their less advantaged peers.

### ***1999 NCES Study***

A 1999 survey conducted by the National Home Education Survey (NHES) Program for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) revealed approximately 49% of families cited a desire to provide a better quality education as their main reason to home school, while 38% cited religious reasons (Gerwertz, 2001). When asked about receiving services from their local public schools, approximately 38% reported they did not know about specific offerings that might be available to them, 6% said they utilized extracurricular activities, and 11% said they utilized texts and materials.

### ***2003 NCES Study***

Four years later NCES followed up on its 1999 study with a survey of home schooling families who had children enrolled in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grades as of December 1, 2002. Parents identified as home schooling families were asked a specific set of questions in relation to their reasons for home schooling, resources utilized, hours of instruction, and if any children attended public schools for at least 9 hours or more weekly. Respondents indicated 32% home schooled for religious reasons, a slight decrease from the 1999 survey. Now, however, 23% of home schooling families indicated utilizing resources from their local public schools or participated in various services and extracurricular activities offered.

### ***Education Next***

Education Next and the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University sponsored a 2007 national survey in an attempt to understand what Americans think about their public schools. Forty percent of respondents said they know a family that is currently home schooling, and these respondents were more likely to support providing home schooled students with more options from their local public schools (Howell & West, 2007).

When asked if they favored allowing home schooled students to attend selected classes at their local public school, approximately 70% of those individuals who were acquainted with a home schooling family indicated they were in favor of this concept. Asked if these same respondents were in favor or opposed to allowing home schooled students to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities at local public schools, 60% said they completely agreed with the concept (Howell & West, 2007).

### **Home Schoolers, Public Schools, and College**

#### ***Public School Boards***

In the early years of home schooling, school boards, professional associations, school administrators, and college admissions officers did not know how to react to such a revolutionary and reactionary concept as home schooling; professional educators often felt that parents who home schooled their children had “turned their back on a time honored assumption that parents and society share in the rearing of the young” (Divoky, 1983, p. 97). Questioning public schools as home schooling families did was viewed by society and school officials as questioning the very fabric of society, and the withdrawal of their children from public schools was seen as the ultimate reproach. Although



tensions still exist, advocates of home schooling and some education leaders are urging greater cooperation between home schoolers and the public school system, and some of these calls for cooperation are creating new educational opportunities for home school families and their children.

### ***National Association of State Board of Education***

In 1988 the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) urged school boards to establish a procedure to open a dialogue between public education and home schooling families. NASBE believed that state boards of education should be strong advocates for education and build consensus among parties seeking to influence the state of education policy (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988). Although NASBE's primary focus was on protecting the public education system, it acknowledged the growing importance of the home schooling population.

NASBE further qualified its home schooling policy in 1996 suggesting that decision-makers should ensure various components be included in state statutes or policies dealing with home schooling. These components, according to NASBE, should include strict enforcement of registration policies, policies for ensuring the competency of the instructor, monitoring outcomes, alignment of home schooling policies with the state's current outcome-based standards and graduation requirements, provisions for remediation, guidelines for participation in regular school programs as long as they meet the same academic and attendance requirements as public school students, reimbursement to schools for providing home schoolers access to programs, and policies for identifying child abuse in the home (NASBE Policy Update, 1996). Although NASBE's recommended guidelines may be seen as overly restrictive to many in the home schooling

community, they nonetheless urge greater recognition of and dialogue with home schooling families.

### ***Public School Administrators***

A 1996 survey of nearly 1,000 public school administrators conducted by *The American School Board Journal* and Xavier University (Pawles, 2001) attempted to determine the state of home schooling in the nation. The survey revealed that while 91% of administrators reported children being home schooled in their district, there was a lack of knowledge by public school administrators of state and district policies regulating home schooling. This lack of knowledge is of major concern to home schooling families since many families are placed under the indirect supervision of local school districts by state law.

Michael Romanowski (2001) of the National Association of Elementary School Principals argues that today the relationship between home schoolers and their public schools continues to experience difficulty. He attributes this difficulty again to a lack of understanding by public school educators as to why parents choose to home school, as it becomes an “us” versus “them” situation. In his opinion teachers and administrators still tend to view home schooling families as loners who are withdrawn from society. They continue to believe that home schooling is a threat to their professional abilities, that home schooling parents’ teaching abilities are academically inferior, and that social development is lacking for these children.

According to Romanowski (2001), the attitude of both home schooling families and public school educators discourages dialogue which could benefit both entities. He argues that by not shedding these negative attitudes and opening a dialogue between the

two groups all students become the losers as this shared information may possibly improve the learning for both groups. He suggests that by working together both entities could maximize each student's potential as this is the essence of a truly democratic educational system. Rather than feeling threatened, public school educators should aid home schooling families, look to home schooling for new and innovative ways to improve parent involvement, find ways to develop better individual instruction, and better utilize computer technology. Romanowski urges home schooling families to discard their pessimistic view of public schools in order to recognize the essential role public education fulfills in our society.

Romanowski (2001) believes that public school officials and home schoolers should be viewed as complementing one another as both have a place and purpose. He urges a broad exchange of ideas, the possibility of dual enrollment for home schooled students, and the establishment of a home school liaison to assist in bringing ideas and problems to the forefront for review and discussion. Home schooling families need to feel connected to their public school system, he argues, because everyone benefits when communities support education.

Lawyers for the conservative Christian home school advocacy group HSLDA also agree that challenges and difficulties still remain between public school administrators and home schooling families. However, their concern focuses on public school officials who they believe often misinterpret state home school regulations. It is their further perception that home schooling families' freedom to home school is slowly being eroded (Longbottom, 2007) because many administrators continue to believe that they have a responsibility to oversee the education of every child. Nonetheless, some public school

districts are taking actions consistent with Romanowski's view and reaching out to home schooling families.

### ***Public School Districts Cooperation with Home Schoolers***

In many states school districts are cooperating with home schoolers in various ways. The NHES estimates that approximately 18% of home schooled children are enrolled in public school part-time, and 6% of home schooled students nationwide participate in extracurricular activities at their local public school (Burgeoning Homeschooling Trend Fuels Growing Legal Controversy, 2004). As early as 1978 one public school in Barnstable, Massachusetts, helped pioneer the concept of assistance to home schooling families. The school not only allowed families to home school, but invited them to use school resources as well as consult staff members as part of their learning resources. This enabled home schooled children to come to school and use the library, take part in activities, or participate in field trips.

The Cupertino School District in California also offered home schooling families the option of open enrollment/alternative education programs as early as 1975. Since California regulation considers home schooling an independent study program, parents are allowed to either establish their home as a private school or affiliate with a school district as an independent study program. Cupertino developed additional programs and services for home schooling students which coincide with the school's philosophy that students achieve to their potential when placed in an educational environment that best suits their needs and those of the family (Lamson, 1992).

These early examples of cooperation are being duplicated across states through policies that provide opportunities for dual enrollment and participation in extracurricular

activities, including sports. Many school districts across the country are allowing some type of dual enrollment for home schoolers giving them the opportunity to attend school on a part-time basis and/or participate in extracurricular activities. Popular school offerings include speech therapy, career counseling, classes in subjects as foreign language and physics, and participation on athletic teams. Approximately 14 states already grant home schooling students access to courses and extracurricular activities, and in another 14 states, bills have been introduced in state legislatures to grant home schoolers such access (Dao, 2005).

In Easton, Pennsylvania, for example, home schooling students may participate in extracurricular activities if they meet a rigorous set of guidelines. These include weekly visits by teachers to validate that the student has achieved passing grades in at least four major subjects. In Fairfax County, Virginia, the county school board voted to allow home schooling students to take courses through the Adult and Community Education Program outside regular school hours. Beginning with the fall 2007 school term, the Prince William County Public School System will be the first school district in Northern Virginia to allow home schoolers to participate in extracurricular activities. This does not, however, include competitive sports teams as they are governed by the Virginia High School League, which only allows full-time students to participate (Shapiro, 2007).

In Iowa legislation enacted in 1991 allows home schoolers dual enrollment. The legislation grants home schoolers the opportunity to enroll in their local school district for academic and instructional programs, participate in extracurricular activities, and use the services and assistance of the appropriate educational agencies. This team effort has benefits to both the Iowa public school systems and home schooling families. The school

districts can continue to receive state aid for home schooled children who participate in the schools' programs, and home schooled families can receive support by having the ability to enroll children in particular classes, participate in sports activities, have access to textbooks and resources, participate in free standardized testing, and avail themselves of enrichment programs. As in Cupertino, the State of Iowa believes that working with home schooling families demonstrates the schools' goals of helping each child reach his or her maximum educational potential (Dahm, 1996).

One of the more controversial areas has arisen over a home schooler's right to participate in extracurricular activities, especially athletics because home schooling families have been reluctant to agree to meet the same eligibility standards required of public school students. However, some states have developed policies to address the issue. In Florida, for example, a compromise with the state home schooling association was reached in which it was agreed that home schooled students would pass five subjects per grading period and maintain a 1.5 grade-point average to participate in athletics (Viadero, 1997).

A similar controversy occurred in Idaho, a state that does not monitor home schoolers' progress. The situation was resolved by requiring home schooled students who wished to participate on public school sports teams to score in the 5<sup>th</sup> stanine on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Because Idaho does not monitor home schooled students' progress, public school systems have little say in what courses a home schooled student undertakes to meet the standard (Natale, 1996).

### *Unease about Family Participation in Public School Offerings*

There are many home schooling parents, however, who believe that even if they do not want to participate in public school offerings and activities, other home schooling families should not be denied. This segment of the home schooling population sees access to public school services as a civil rights issue for people who pay school taxes. On the other hand, many home schooling families view such an independent school program as another middle-class entitlement program based on funding taken from all taxpayers. Such adversaries view dual enrollment as another way for the government to administer oversight of the home schooling community, believing that once a home schooling family participates in such a program, it may not be easy for them to relinquish the benefit. Therefore, when enough home schooling families avail themselves of this opportunity, politicians may view home schooling as a constituency, and it will be reduced to another special interest group lobbying the government for their fair share. It becomes a situation within the home schooling community of safeguarding their freedom and independence as an educational alternative (Cardiff, 1996).

HSLDA agrees with that position suggesting that a majority of home schooling families are unsure about allowing children to participate in public school activities (Dao, 2005). The organization further explains that home schooling parents may want legal access to such resources because they are taxpayers, but can choose not to utilize them (Jacobson, 1997). However, many Christian home schooling families apparently do not utilize such resources because they are members of HSLDA. Families who join HSLDA for a fee of \$100 annually are entitled to prepaid legal services for assistance in the event they encounter problems with their home schooling program; however, HSLDA does not

accept members who utilize public school programs for their home schoolers. Although HSLDA appears to represent the majority of home schooling families, its membership total is less than one-sixth of all home schooling families (Cordes, 2000).

### ***Maryland and Home Schooling***

Maryland's home schooling regulation does not provide home schooling families with any type of services or options for dual enrollment. The only service provided is the option to participate in standardized testing the Maryland School Assessments and the High School Assessments at the home schooled student's designated local public school. Parents make this choice for testing when they file their intent to home school. Test results are reported directly to each individual local school office and then to the parent.

Maryland state education officials are of the opinion that such opportunities as dual enrollment or participation in extra curricular activities would be too costly and too difficult to monitor. They especially believe this in regard to the achievement aspect for home schooled students and their eligibility to participate in certain activities or interscholastic sports programs. As one school official noted, the direction of the state is for families to decide that their child will be educated either in school or out of school (Gross, 1997).

Although Maryland home schooling families do not have access to public school resources, they have joined together in various counties to form home school academies and resource centers. For example parents in one county created support groups throughout the county to help each other in their home schooling efforts. Another group established a home school high school with more than 250 families in which parents have hired teachers with expertise in algebra, biology, Latin, and Spanish to serve as resources



when parents do not feel strong in those subjects (Gross, 1997). The concept of hiring teachers to educate students is growing in popularity according to Luis Huerta, professor of public policy and education at Teachers College of Columbia University (Saulny, 2006).

### ***College Admission***

It appears that home schooling has not placed this group at a disadvantage for college admission as 96% of colleges report a steady number of home school applicants (Carroll, 2003). While many colleges and universities were at first skeptical of home schooling applicants, they now actively recruit these students because of their different educational experiences, knowledge of how to access and use information, and their enthusiasm for learning. Nationwide 33% of home schoolers attend a four-year college; over 17% go on to a two-year college; 17% attend college after waiting a year; 12% are engaged in full-time employment (What is Home Schooling?, 1995).

Colleges have had to develop admissions procedures especially for home schooling students which utilize student portfolios, parents' transcripts, and SAT and ACT test scores as legitimate methods of assessing students' preparation (Blair, 2000). Many colleges are requiring home schoolers to submit a detailed outline of the courses studied, textbooks used, and concepts learned as part of the application process. In 2000 approximately 50% of colleges and universities had a formal evaluation policy for home schoolers, and in just 4 years according to the National Association for College Admission Counseling the number has jumped to 83% (Chandler, 2007). There are approximately 200,000 home schooled students now enrolled in colleges and universities

across the country, and the NCES estimates that the number will probably increase to one million over this next decade as home schoolers become of age (Blair, 2000).

An admissions counselor exclusively for home schooled students at the University of Maryland College Park explained that the university wants to make sure the work home schoolers have done is similar to the work they will encounter at the university (Nolan, 1998). Other colleges including Harvard report sending admissions officers to home schooling conventions in order to seek out students. Stanford University reports that it admits home schoolers at a rate equal to or higher than those from public schools (Cloud & Morse, 2001), and one Stanford admissions counselor indicated the home schoolers stand out for their maturity (Chandler, 2007).

Approximately 10 years ago HSLDA decided to establish a college designed specifically for home schooled students. In 1997 HSLDA purchased property in Loudoun County, Virginia, to construct the first college dedicated to home schoolers (Pae & Shear, 1997), and Patrick Henry College opened its doors to students in 1999. Although the school is nondenominational, it has a Christian orientation reflecting a conservative ideology offering programs in public policy areas such as government, politics, and journalism. The academic emphasis is on apprenticeships modeled after similar practices in European countries that provide students with on-the-job training (Archer, 1997). The college's mission is to train a new generation of Christian, conservative political leaders (Seymour, 2000), who will work for legislators and think tanks to enact change (Cordes, 2000).

The college graduated its first class of 14 students in May 2002. It now has a population of over 300 students with an additional 100 plus in their distance learning

program. The college's full enrollment goal is expected to be 1,200 undergraduate students. The school accepts no government funding and relies on donors to help fund further construction (Copeland, 2001).

### ***Adult Home Schoolers***

As the home schooling movement has grown-up, so have these home schooled students. These individuals are now marrying, and in some instances, are choosing to home school their own children. A 2003 HSLDA survey of over 7,300 home schooled adults revealed that over 74% have taken college-level classes as compared to 46% of the general United States population, although 50% of the home schooled adults are still currently full-time students. Of those surveyed 95% indicated they were glad to have been home schooled, and 74% of participants with children age 5 or older were presently home schooling them (Ray, 2003).

First generation home schoolers were the subject of a study done by J. Gary Knowles, and his findings indicated that these adults were not even moderately disadvantaged. Two-thirds were married, which equals the norm for adults their age, and more than 75% believed that home schooling had helped them interact with people from different levels of society (Lyman, 1998).

### **Conclusion**

Home schoolers, despite the absence of a uniform national regulation to control home schooling, are doing well according to many researchers. These students have proven themselves academically capable through winning or placing in the National Geographic Bee, National Spelling Bee, and as merit scholars (Home Schooled Boy Wins Geography Bee, 2002; Lyman, 1998). They are being pursued by colleges for their

achievements and are attending higher education institutions. Now, due to their home schooling experience, some first-generation home schoolers are choosing to home school their own children.

Studies of this population throughout the years have confirmed that families choosing to home school are committed to making it work. However, studies also reveal that as the home schooling population moves more toward the mainstream, families are becoming more aware of and interested in availing themselves of educational opportunities offered by public schools.

Public school educators admit that in many instances they are unfamiliar with their state and local home schooling regulations and are skeptical of home schooling families. Home schooling families often maintain a negative attitude toward the public schools. Both groups are being urged to shed their negative attitudes toward one another and be more open to sharing ideas that may benefit all students especially since home schooling families and public educators are concerned with maximizing each student's potential, the essence of a truly democratic educational system (Romanowski, 2001).

To understand this population better it is important to examine home schooling families in their own environment, paying attention to family values and the choices available to them within social and institutional constraints. There appears to be a growing interest within the home schooling population to possibly interact with their local public school systems. Even though conservative Christian home schooling families and conservative Christian home schooling advocacy groups stress that home schoolers freedom is being encroached by local government, some Christian families in Maryland are choosing not to be monitored by church umbrella groups and are turning to

Maryland's Option A, their public school system. It is important to learn more about the state's home schooling population in an effort to craft home schooling policies that are appropriate for these families and their children.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS**

Schools are a reflection of our societal values. As demonstrated throughout the history of public schools, schools serve a multiplicity of purposes and communities, and one emergent purpose may be to provide more support for home schooling families as an alternate form of education. If, as Michael Romanowski (2001) suggests, a dialogue is developed between home schooling families and school administrators, state policy makers could begin making school resources and additional services available to home schooling students. Although there are significant challenges associated with forging a stronger educational partnership between the public schools and home schooling families, such a partnership could enhance the public school's mission of serving the communities in which they are located. Schools may also benefit if they regain state and federal educational revenues through the establishment of some type of dual enrollment or other options for home schoolers. To explore these possibilities and answer the research questions put forth in Chapter 1, I next discuss the research design and methods used for data collection and analysis.

#### **Exploratory Case Study**

I chose to conduct an exploratory case study to investigate the phenomenon of home schooling in a local school system within the Baltimore-Washington-Northern Virginia Combined Statistical Area (CSV) and whether the target population has desires and expectations to participate in any public school services that might be offered to them. The choice of case study as a research strategy allows me to focus on this phenomenon in one setting, the targeted public school system, which enables me to

understand better this complex, contemporary, social phenomenon with possible policy implications. As Robert Yin (2003) suggests a case study is an appropriate design for “examining contemporary events but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated” (p. 7). Interviews with home schooling families allowed me to focus on this contemporary phenomenon of home schooling and a family’s decision to be monitored through Option A (i.e., monitored by the public school system), how that decision was made within the institutional and social constraints confronting a family, and what desires the family may have in regard to additional services from their public schools.

### ***Rationale for the Study***

My research design evolved from an internship with the office of home schooling at the target public school district for this study. This internship had benefits similar to what would be gained from doing a pilot study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). It provided me with an opportunity to “test the researcher’s ideas and explore their implications” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 44), at least as they involved my own perceptions of home schoolers and home schooling families. It also gave me a “better understanding of the meaning that these phenomena and events have for actors who are involved in them...” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 45) – specifically, in this study, the diversity of reasons for home schooling given by families that chose Option A in the target school district.

As part of my internship experiences, I participated with five public school teachers and administrators in the January/February 2003 portfolio reviews of elementary, middle, and high school home schooling students. At that time the target public school system was conducting two types of reviews – one in which families dropped off portfolios for review and one in which families had personal reviews with the

home school director. This internship served as a first-hand introduction to home schooling families in the target public school system, and it provided me an opportunity to observe the portfolio review process, talk with families participating in Option A, and interact with public school officials. I also participated in the personal portfolio interview process and was introduced to families as a doctoral student at the University of Maryland conducting research on home schooling. If a family was not comfortable with my presence, I excused myself from the review.

This experience was especially helpful as it allowed me to understand what might constitute an exploratory case study after participating in the actual case setting. Personal discussions with some of these families provided excellent insight into the home schooling population and public school implementation of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) home schooling regulations. As I spoke with home schooling families, it was apparent that the educational experiences provided to their children are varied in scope, approach, and intensity as reflected in the literature. No two families described their home schooling programs in the same manner, and student portfolios reflected the varying curricula families used.

Observations and portfolio reviews both revealed that the choice of monitoring plans for families was somewhat different in comparison to information gleaned from the literature. For example some of the families in Option A were conservative Christians utilizing various Christian curricula; yet these families chose the public school monitoring option rather than the church umbrella group option. During personal reviews, I asked several of these families why they chose to be monitored by the public school system rather than Option B, affiliating with a church umbrella group. Some



families indicated they found support from several church umbrella groups marginal and, thus, turned to the public school system. This surprised me because it ran counter to the literature concerning religiously motivated home schooling families and their desire to have no interaction with public schools (Archer, 1999; Cardiff, 1996; Cordes, 2000; Divoky, 1983; Lines, 1987, 1999; Longbottom, 2007; Mathews, 1999; Mayberry et al., 1995; Ray, 1988; Seelhoff, 1999).

This experience made it apparent to me that there was far more diversity within Option A families than might be expected. It also raised the question of whether these families would desire additional educational services, even if they were home schooling for religious/moral reasons. I decided that I wanted to better understand their reasons for home schooling, their home school experiences, their decisions to choose Option A, and their interests in additional services from the public schools. I determined that conducting an exploratory case study using a survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews would be one approach to gaining this understanding. The survey questionnaire could provide me with a general description of the home schooling population that chose Option A, while the personal interviews could reveal the scope and true nature of reasons for home schooling and whether families might avail themselves of additional services offered to them by their local public school.

### ***Research Questions***

Bill Gillham (2000) suggests that, “Good research questions are those which enable you to achieve your aims and which are capable of being answered in the research setting” (p. 17). Because no studies have been conducted in Maryland concerning the state’s home school population, my questions are designed to examine the diverse

characteristics of the targeted home schooling population including their reasons to home school, their experiences, and whether they would be interested in participating in services offered them by the public school system. My study questions are as follows:

1. What are the reasons Maryland home schooling families choose Option A? Why do some religiously motivated families choose Option A?
2. What services do Maryland home schooling families want made available to them through their local public school system?

I relied on two types of data to answer these questions. The first type of data was collected through a questionnaire I developed that captured data about the phenomenon locally. It numerically described the characteristics of families such as reasons to home school, number of children being home schooled, children's ages, and participation in home schooling support organizations. Although quantitative in nature, I used these data to facilitate qualitative data collection and analyses. Personal interviews, the second source of data, gave me insights into answers to many of the survey items through the words of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). These interviews also gave me an opportunity to explore in-depth more complex issues, such as an individual's beliefs about the appropriate role of government in education.

This information provided me with different perspectives on the central research questions and the overall experiences. Each type or slice of data that I collected became one component of an overall picture of the home schooling families in my study. As

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) contend:

...no one kind of data on a category nor technique for data collection is necessarily appropriate. Different kinds of data give the analyst different views or vantage points from which to understand a category and to develop its properties; these different views we have called 'slices of data' (p. 65).

Coupling or integrating both types of data aided in gaining an insight into each family's lived experience and their thoughts about acquiring additional services from their local public school system. The use of survey questionnaires and personal interviews also enhanced the study's reliability, gave me greater confidence in my interpretations, and should deepen the reader's understanding of the phenomenon (see Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, for an explanation of how the use of multiple methods enhances study results).

### ***Research Site***

The research site chosen for this study was the public school system in which I completed my internship. Located within the Baltimore-Washington-Northern Virginia Combined Statistical Area (CSA), it is one of the state's largest school systems with one of the state's largest home schooling populations. This particular area is experiencing tremendous growth and the Maryland State Department of Planning estimates the population will increase by 11.5% in 2010 from the prior 2000 census figures. Additionally, in the next few years the CSA will be dramatically affected by the federal government's Base Re-Alignment and Closure (BRAC) program which is estimated to create approximately 60,000 new jobs in the region (Chick, 2007). This influx of families into the state and the target area may mean that a large number of home schooling families could be moving to Maryland from states in which they have enjoyed a variety of resources from their public schools, including participation in extracurricular activities and limited enrollment in public school academic classes. Since Maryland does not offer such opportunities to home schoolers, policy makers may find it prudent to examine more

closely the expectations of Maryland’s home schooling population, and, if necessary consider re-evaluating the state’s home schooling policies.

***Questionnaire***

The first type of data collected was survey questionnaires. Yin (2003) suggests that using a survey or questionnaire as part of a case study can “produce quantitative data as part of the case study evidence” (p. 91). It was also a cost effective and a time efficient manner in which to identify possible interviewees among the home schooling families participating in public school monitoring in the target public school district. In developing my questionnaire, I took advantage of the 1999 and 2003 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveys that were designed to gather information from a national sample of home schooling families. These surveys provided sample questionnaire items, response categories, and at least a rough estimate of how home schooling families might respond.

The questionnaire (Appendix B) used in the study was a close-ended instrument containing 6 simple-answer questions designed to gather general data on family characteristics and reasons to home school. The last question inquired as to the family’s willingness to participate further in my study via the interview process.

**Table 4: Target Area Families Who Home School in Option A**

<b>Option A Families: N= 300</b>	
Number of Families to be Monitored by Local School System	300
Number of Families Receiving Packet at Interview Session	120
Number of Questionnaires Returned	47

My initial contact with the target Option A families was through the personal portfolio review process with the target public school system. I decided to use this process as a way of distributing the questionnaires to home schooling families. Families were given an introductory packet that included a letter explaining my research and asking their cooperation in completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire. To aid in retrieving the questionnaires the home school director from the target school system offered to distribute the packets to families during the portfolio interviews and to collect completed surveys. I believed that having the director distribute the packets and questionnaire added to the credibility of my research as these families generally know and trust this individual.

Questionnaire data provided an overview of the characteristics of the target home schooling population and contributed to a broad understanding of the phenomenon. Data were not sufficient to conduct statistical analyses. Instead data were displayed in table form to facilitate the analysis and communicate findings (Miles & Huberman, 1984). I present the results of the survey in Chapter 4.

### ***Personal Interviewees***

The second type of data collected was personal interviews. Yin (2003) suggests the case study researcher should possess several skills for the interview process which will enable the researcher to: ask good questions, be a good listener, be adaptive and flexible, have a firm grasp on the issues being studied, and be unbiased by preconceived notions (p. 59). In an effort to meet these skills, I drew on my internship experience to serve as a guide in developing questions and protocol for the interviews. My goal was to develop a purposeful conversation directed at obtaining information on the home

schooling experiences of families that agreed to participate in the interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

My interview questions were designed to elicit meaningful information from participants as the “overwhelming strength of the face-to-face interview is the ‘richness’ of communication that is possible” (Gillham, 2000, p. 62). Interviews were conducted in person or by telephone depending on what was most convenient for the family. The interviews were approximately 60 minutes in length. The interview questions and probes that I used are listed below. The protocol called for asking the main question in each category and following up with the probes listed under questions or new questions to explore any additional ideas that surfaced (see Merriam, 1998, for a description of this strategy).

### **Interview Questions**

1. Why did you choose to home school your child(ren)?
  - Major reasons
  - Have reasons changed since you began home schooling
2. Describe your experiences as a home schooling family.
  - Typical day
  - Challenges you experience
3. What types of resources do you use when home schooling?
  - Use of technology (e.g. the Internet)
  - Community resources (e.g. library, recreational facilities)
  - Home schooling groups
  - Curriculum utilized, how did you choose that curriculum
4. How long do you think that you will continue to home school your child(ren)?
  - Reason to discontinue home schooling
  - Would your consider enrolling your child(ren) in public school/private school

5. Home schooling families have the option of having their program monitored by the public schools or by a church organization. Why did you decide to use the public school rather than a church organization?
  - Did you consider church groups, if so which ones
  - Advantages/disadvantages of working with public school
6. If offered, would you utilize any additional services provided by the public school system as part of your home schooling activities?
  - Dual enrollment
  - Extracurricular activities
7. What do you think the role of government should be in educating children?
  - Things the government should/should not be responsible for

The completed questionnaires began the process of identifying potential interviewees. Questionnaire responses were categorized according to the reason a family listed on the questionnaire for home schooling – religious/moral, academic, or other. Responses in each of these categories were then examined to identify respondents willing to participate in personal interviews. I was also interested in identifying and interviewing families who may have home schooled at some point with a church umbrella group but were being monitored by the public school system. The literature (Cloud & Morse, 2001; Cordes, 2000; Halle, 2002; Seelhoff, 1999) indicates these families are not amenable to government oversight so their experiences with the church umbrella group and their return to the Option A monitoring could be very insightful.

My goal was to identify a total of seven to ten respondents representative of these categories who would be willing to participate in interviews. As Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen (1998) suggest, “If you cannot see everything and talk to everybody, you want to make sure that you sample widely enough so that a diversity of types are explored” (p. 61), as it is “richness” of communication that is the strength in the interviewing process (Gillham, 2000, p. 62). For the purposes of my study, the reasons that families gave were

the most compelling categories to use in sampling. The protocol followed for interviews included an initial contact by telephone or email and the establishment of a time and place convenient to the family for the interview. Some respondents initially agreed to be interviewed, but decided not to participate in the interview process after being contacted. When this occurred, I attempted to replace participants with participants from the same sampling category. (I report the details of this process in Chapter 4.)

**Table 5: Reasons to Home School for 22 Families Who Agreed to be Interviewed:**

<b>Option A Families</b>	
Religious/Moral	6
Academic	5
Other	7
Both Academic and Religious/Moral	3
No reason indicated	1

**Table 6: Reasons to Home School for 25 Families Not Wanting to be Interviewed:**

<b>Option A Families</b>	
Religious/Moral	8
Academic	5
Other	8
Both Academic and Religious/Moral	4

**Table 7: Individuals Completing the Questionnaires**

<b>Individuals</b>	<b>Number</b>
Women	21
Men	1
Husband & Wife	1
No Identification	24

In order to encourage the participation of home schooling families I sought to emphasize the confidentiality of the interviews. I reiterated that their identities would not be revealed in any public or private discussions or presentation of results. Prior to completing any personal interviews I obtained written consent from each participant in accordance with the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board guidelines. The



consent form outlined the research agenda and emphasized the fact that I am focusing on a family's choice to educate their children and how that choice is affected by institutional and social constraints within Maryland. The form stressed that the research is in no way a judgment on a family's choice to home school. Throughout the interview process I did my best to treat each individual with respect, to develop rapport, adhere to the interview questions, and remain open-minded about the answers that each gave to the interview questions. I appreciated and expressed my gratitude for the time that each interviewee gave to the study.

Interviews were audio taped, when possible, and transcribed. The transcription provided a more accurate method of capturing responses than simple note taking; audio taping also facilitated the interview process with home schooling families, as I was not distracted by capturing a record of the event. Initial transcripts also provided a formative check for subsequent interviews. During interviews I sought to not dominate the conversation but to facilitate the acquisition of as much information from the interviewee as possible (Maxwell, 1996). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that "a good interview can be determined by the transcript, "If the respondent's part is long and the interviewer's is short, one is looking at good, rich interview material" (p. 99). Therefore, I constantly reviewed the typed transcripts to make sure I was guiding and not dominating the conversation, or leading the participants in any way that would influence their responses. Personal interview data provided an in-depth examination of issues central to this study and a means of clarifying the answers to questionnaire items. Data were displayed in tables for each interview question to facilitate the analysis and communicate findings (Miles & Huberman, 1984). I present the results of the interviews in Chapter 4.

### ***Data Analysis Principles***

As Gillham (2000) stresses, the purpose of data analysis is to “faithfully reflect in summary and organized form what you have found” (p. 25). Therefore, each source of evidence provided valuable information as the researcher attempts to present a true picture of the phenomenon. The researcher must remain open minded during data collection and analysis as this will develop and direct the narrative and the interpretation of results (Gillham, 2000).

Data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously in this study, particularly regarding the personal interview data. For example information gathered from interviews was reviewed for substantive statements and themes. As main categories emerged, interview transcripts were continually reviewed in order to evaluate categories, to ensure that substantive statements were included in the appropriate categories, and to determine if some categories associated with answers to questions could be combined, eliminated, or split. As this process moved forward I decided if data were adequate and whether what I had identified as themes had been saturated sufficiently. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out there is sometimes a strong tendency for the researcher to remain in the field in order to ‘know everything’ which does not necessarily lead to theoretical saturation. I was guided by their description of saturation:

...no additional data is being found whereby the researcher can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated...when one category is saturated, nothing remains but to go on to new groups for data on other categories, and attempt to saturate these categories also (p. 61).

As the information from the surveys and interviews solidified into a set of findings, I was able to use this information to address the research questions for this study

from multiple sources of data. New perspectives on specific issues, such as why did families choose to home school, emerged through the interview process that were not apparent in my questionnaire data. John Creswell (1998) and Yin (2003) urge the researcher to construct a matrix of the various forms of evidence to facilitate analysis and develop a database for the study. By constructing the case's database using notes, tabular materials and narratives, I was able to create an efficient method to retrieve information during data analysis as well as develop tables that would assist the reader in linking the evidence from the initial research questions to my conclusions.

As I conducted the analysis, I was aware of the importance of presenting a study in which the findings could be trusted by the reader and other professionals. Creswell (1998) suggests that verification "occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing" (p. 194), but also emphasizes the importance of having study participants verify field notes and transcripts. I asked each interviewee to review transcripts and my interpretations of interviews for accuracy in order to ensure that I was correctly portraying the conversation and pertinent information. "Member checks," as this technique is frequently called in the literature, is an excellent way to enhance the internal validity of a study because it requires the researcher to "[take] data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). By continuously reviewing these transcripts and sharing my interpretations with interviewees, I attempted to insure that my conclusions were consistent with the evidence and not subject to my own bias.

Interviewing families who home schooled for different reasons provided different viewpoints on home schooling and aided in triangulating information in order to

“construct a plausible explanation about the phenomenon being studied” (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). In describing the case associated with home schooling, I tried to collect thick, rich descriptions of the families to allow the reader to make decisions regarding the transferability of the findings to other settings (Creswell, 1998). As Sharan Merriam (1998) suggests it is the researcher’s obligation to provide thick, rich description in order to enable readers to “determine how closely their situations match the research situation” (p. 210). Although I was not always successful in providing such a description, I attempted to contextualize these findings by comparing the survey questionnaire results for the study with survey questionnaire results representative of national home schooling populations. In this way I attempted to enhance the external validity of the study’s results.

Finally, in preparing the tables for Chapter 4, and in interpreting the results in Chapter 5, I strove to be aware of my own biases and their potential effects on the presentation of data and the interpretation of results. As Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman (1999) suggest “the researcher’s challenge is to demonstrate that their personal interest will not bias the study” (p. 28). Therefore, I sought to assure that my descriptions were factual and free of distortion, and that I had guarded against value judgments in my analysis. While I acknowledge my own personal belief that a stronger partnership between home school families and the public schools would be beneficial to both parties, I strove to have my presentation of data and analyses reflect the perceptions of the families that participated in this study and not my own.

### **Conclusion**

Researchers have reiterated that home schooling families need to be studied within the context of their home schooling decisions. My study was designed to do

exactly that by examining a specific home schooling population within the context of their choice to be monitored by a Maryland public school system. Through the use of a survey questionnaire and personal interviews, I was able to gain insights into possible reasons for home schooling and possible interests in receiving additional services from Maryland public schools. The results of this research could be beneficial to state and local policy makers as they attempt to examine why the Option A monitoring plan attracts families with a multitude of reasons to home schooling, including religiously motivated families. As the home schooling phenomenon gains in popularity and attracts a broader spectrum of families, policy makers may want to consider how to supplement the educational experiences of this increasingly important student population. By examining whether home schooling families are interested in utilizing services from their local public school systems, I sought to explore the opening of a dialogue between policy makers and the home schooling population in an effort to develop appropriate and effective home schooling policies.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SURVEY AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

Home schooling, while sometimes referred to as one of the oldest forms of education, has only been legal in all of the states for the past 25 years. In this relatively short time the home schooling landscape has gone from being dominated mainly by religious conservatives to attracting a more widespread constituency looking for an alternative educational experience for their children. Now, these families can choose from a one billion-dollar curriculum industry, a myriad of home schooling networks, resources, and affiliated organizations (Chandler, 2007). While each home schooling family is unique in its approach to and reasons for home schooling, many home-schooling families believe that their children learn more and learn better at home, and that it is important for them to maintain control over their children's education.

As home schooling is evolving so is the attitude of some public school districts in their relationships with these families. States such as California, Washington, Iowa, Alaska, and Texas are now offering home schoolers the opportunity to enroll in classes, participate in extracurricular activities, or participate in virtual classrooms (Lines, 2000). However, many families associated with the Christian right believe such public school offerings are a way of eroding parental control leading to further regulation of home schooling (Longbottom, 2007). Regardless, such public school opportunities are being welcomed by many home schooling families.

This chapter will present results from the questionnaire and selected interviews described in the previous chapter. I present the questionnaire results first, followed by

the results of the interviews with individual families. In the final chapter I use these results to answer the research questions posed by this dissertation study.

### **Survey Results**

Maryland does not offer home schooling families the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, enroll in classes, or utilize public school resources. Maryland's unique home schooling regulation allows parents to choose monitoring options either by their local public school (Option A) or a bona fide church group (Option B). Option A, contrary to the home school literature, attracts families home schooling for religious/moral reasons as well as for academic reasons. Because Option A families, the target population for the survey, represent a more diverse cross-section of home schooling families than indicated by the literature, I wanted to examine their home schooling experiences and if there is an interest in utilizing public school offerings. Such an interest in opportunities could indicate to Maryland school officials that it may be beneficial to consider opening a dialogue in order to foster a collaborative approach to education with these families.

#### ***Questionnaire Administration***

Having reviewed several national survey questionnaires including the 2003 NCES survey, I designed a questionnaire that would be quick and easy for families to complete (see Chapter 3 for details). It contains six informational questions concerning a family's reason for home schooling, the number and age of children being home schooled, and home schooling experiences. The questionnaire was coupled with a letter introducing myself and the research project. The entire packet was distributed to home schooling

families at their child's January/February 2007 scheduled portfolio review by the home school staff at the participating public school system.

Because I had worked with the home school director of the target public school system during a previous internship, he was familiar with my research project and offered his assistance in distributing the packets. At the completion of the portfolio reviews, parents (usually the mother, see Table 7, Chapter 3) were given a brief explanation about the research project and were asked to complete the questionnaire. Since I could not attend all the portfolio reviews scheduled due to full-time employment, the home school director collected the completed questionnaires and forwarded them to me.

Although the director and his staff had approximately 300 portfolio reviews scheduled during the two month period, only 120 packets were distributed during the review sessions due to unforeseen circumstances. For example, some packets were not distributed to parents because the young children accompanying them became too fussy or because parents were in a hurry. Thus, it became too cumbersome for these parents to read and complete the questionnaire at the review. Some parents took the packet home to be completed, but they did not return the questionnaire. Moreover, scheduled reviews were sometimes cancelled by parents as well as reviewers due to illness or other scheduling conflicts. Of the 120 packets distributed, 47 questionnaires were completed and given to the director. This equals a 39% return rate for the distributed questionnaires and a 16% return rate for the families originally scheduled for reviews.

### ***Questionnaire Responses***

To begin preparation for analyzing data and scheduling interviews, the completed questionnaires were first reviewed and categorized according to the families' reasons for



home schooling. Table 8 presents the survey results. Of the 47 returned questionnaires one family did not indicate a reason to home school or share their own particular reason; 17 families indicated religious/moral reasons; 10 families listed academic reasons; 15 checked other. Four families checked both religious/moral and academic reasons indicating both were equally as important. Overall, therefore, a little over two-thirds of the families cited religious/moral (36%), 21% indicated academic, and 32% checked other as reasons for home schooling. Even though Option A represents the secular option for monitoring under Maryland law, the religious/moral category was the modal response for families who completed the questionnaire.

Nearly one-third of the families (32%) responding checked other as their main reason for home schooling. Four families indicated that their children had a health related reason such as severe allergies, emotional problems, or a learning disability. Ten families stressed that it was a combination of school-related factors that led them to home school such as poor schools, concerns for safety, the ability to allow children to explore their interests, and failure to meet the kindergarten eligibility age for enrollment. One family said they traveled extensively and home schooling gave them needed flexibility.

Most families reported that more than one child had been home schooled. Nearly one-third of the families (30%) reported that 2 children had been home schooled, whereas 19% reported having home schooled 3 children, and 21% having home schooled more than 3 children. When asked how many children were currently being home schooled, families identified a total of 97 children (an average of nearly 2 children per family). The majority of these children were elementary-school-age (59%), followed by middle-school-age (25%), and high-school- age children (16%).

Only one family indicated that one or more adults had been home schooled themselves (2%), suggesting that home schooling was not a cross-generational tradition for this group of families. Forty seven percent of the families belonged to one or more home schooling organizations, and over 11 different groups were identified by these families ranging from local associations to religious organizations in several different states. One family belonged to the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). Fifteen percent of the families had been monitored previously through Option B. Of the families who had been monitored by a church umbrella group, one had been monitored for 4 years, and the remaining 7 families had been monitored by a church group for 2 years or less.

**Table 8: Questionnaire Responses (n = 47)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>N=47</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Reasons to Home School:</i>		
Religious/Moral	17	36%
Academics	10	21%
Both	4	9%
Other	15	32%
Health-related (e.g., allergies, learning disability)	4	9%
School-related (e.g. safety, not kindergarten eligible)	10	21%
Personal (flexibility for traveling)	1	2%
No Response	1	2%
<i>Number of Children in Family Home Schooled:</i>		
3+	10	21%
3	9	19%
2	14	30%
1	14	30%
<i>Ages and Approx. Grade Span of Children being Home Schooled:</i>		
5-10 (K-5)	57	59%
11-13 (6 – 8)	24	25%
14-17 (9-12)	16	16%
<i>Adults Ever Home Schooled:</i>		
Yes	1	2%
No	46	98%
<i>Belong to Home Schooling Organization:</i>		

Yes	22	47%
No	25	53%
<i>Previously Monitored by Church Umbrella Group:</i>		
Yes	7	15%
No	36	77%
No response	4	9%

***Comparison with National Survey Results.***

Unfortunately, there are no surveys of home schoolers in Maryland, so there is no way of comparing the characteristics of the families that participated in this survey with the characteristics of either home schooling families in the local school system or the state. National surveys provide possible benchmarks, but only for a limited number of characteristics. In 2003 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducted a nationwide survey to collect a wide range of educational indicators about families with students ages 5 – 17 and with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. As part of that survey, NCES included a number of survey items that specifically targeted the home schooling population (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/homeschool/>).

A rudimentary comparison between the national and target populations can be made in regard to reasons to home school and number and age of children. Table 9 presents comparative data. As indicated by the table, the ratio of families citing religious/moral reasons to families citing academic reasons is roughly the same in both surveys (about 2:1). Although far more families in the NCES survey cited other reasons than families in the study survey this difference may be due to the NCES survey providing families with a broader set of response categories. If the families in the study who identified both were added to the other category, the results of the NCES survey and study survey would be even more comparable.

Families in the study survey appear to have fewer and younger children than the national population of home schoolers. Nearly two-thirds of the national population reported having 3 or more children (62%), whereas only 40% of the target families reported having home schooled that number of children. Although this difference might be due to a difference in the wording of the items (one asks about the number of children in the family, while the other asks about the number of children home schooled), the results for the age of home schooled children is consistent. Moreover, in the national survey, there are fewer elementary-school-age children and more high-school-age children than in the survey of target families. Although these differences might be due to differences in the wording of survey questions (e.g., one survey asks about the number of children in the family, while the other survey asks about the number of children home schooled), the results of the study survey suggest that the target families have smaller families with younger children than the national population. Of course, such a difference may reflect broader demographic differences between the school system in which these families reside and the nation as a whole.

**Table 9: Comparison between 2003 NCES and Maryland Data**

<b>Category</b>	<b>NCES</b>	<b>Study</b>
<i>Reasons to Home School:</i>		
Religious/Moral	30%	36%
Academics	16%	21%
Both		9%
Other	54%	32%
<i>Number of Children in the Family:</i>		
3+	62%	40%
2	28%	30%
1	10%	30%
<i>Grade Level of Children:</i>		
K – 5	43%	59%
6 – 8	28%	25%

9 – 12	29%	16%
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### **Family Interview Results**

Personal interviews were designed to delve into a family’s home schooling decisions and experiences in greater depth than could be provided by the questionnaire results. The interview questions consisted of 7 broad inquiries with suggested follow-up questions to facilitate discussion (see Chapter 3). The initial inquiries ranged from clarification about the reason for home schooling to the types of resources used for home schooling to attitudes about the role of government in educating children. Families were also asked about their decision to select Option A for monitoring under Maryland law, and, if they had been previously monitored under Option B, why they decided to shift from being monitored by a church umbrella group to being monitored by the public school system. Because a major purpose of the study is to better understand possibilities for greater collaboration between home schooling families and public schools in Maryland, the interview explored whether families thought that they would make use of additional services if offered to them by the public schools. The following sections explain the selection process, the manner in which the interviews were conducted, and the results of interview questions.

#### ***Selection of Families***

The questionnaire asked families if they would be willing to participate in a personal interview “to discuss your decision to use the public school system to monitor your home school program and your home schooling experiences.” Fifty percent of the respondents noted on the questionnaire that they did not wish to participate in the interview process; however, 22 families indicated a willingness to participate in the

interview process. Families were categorized by their reason to home school of which 8 indicated religious/moral reasons for home schooling, 5 indicated academic reasons, 7 listed other reasons, one checked both religious/moral and academics reasons, and one gave no reason.

Once this was completed 3 families were randomly chosen in each category and contacted (or a single family in the case of those who checked both religious/moral and academic reasons or provided no reason at all). All of the families were contacted initially by email since many families only provided email addresses. Five of the 11 families contacted agreed to interviews. These 5 families represented all 5 of the initial categories used to select potential participants with one family per category (religious/moral; academic; both; other; no response).

Desiring to interview approximately 7 – 10 families, I again reviewed the remaining list of names and emailed these families. Four additional families responded positively. In total, 9 families agreed to participate in the interviews: 3 families that gave religious/moral reasons; 2 families that gave academic reasons; one family that gave both reasons; 2 that gave other reasons; and one that gave no reason. Four of the families had previously home schooled with a church umbrella group. I was especially interested in the reasons why these families left Option B as the literature suggests such families want to be in control of their children's education with no interference from government agencies. Although interviews were scheduled with all 9 families, one family, the family that cited both religious/moral and academic reasons, did not keep their scheduled appointment and did not return telephone calls to reschedule the interview. A total of 8 families, therefore, participated in the personal interviews.

### *Administration of Interviews*

Interviews were conducted at times and locations most convenient for the families. One interview was conducted in the family home; 2 were conducted at public libraries, and the remaining interviews were done via telephone. All of the interviews were conducted with the mother of the home schooled children, and, in each case, the mother identified herself as the person primarily responsible for their child's home instruction. Table 10 uses pseudonyms to identify the type of interview conducted with each family.

**Table 10: Type of Interview**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Personal Interview</b>	<b>Telephone Interview</b>
Adams		X
Baker	X	
Cook		X
Dunn	X	
Evans		X
Fisher	X	
Green		X
Hill		X

As expected the interviewees were somewhat skeptical about my research. I reiterated that this was in no way a judgment of their approach to home schooling, but was designed to examine reasons families chose Option A and if they would be amenable to participating in any opportunities offered by the public school system. Mothers appeared to relax more after this was discussed and became more comfortable with the process. Telephone interviews were harder in some respect as there was no personal connection between the interviewee and myself. Nonetheless, most of parents were

comfortable with the telephone interview and discussion flowed more freely once the interview began. On average, interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

When concluded, interviews were transcribed and e-mailed to the families for any additions or corrections. Five of the 8 interviewees returned the transcribed interview with additional comments. Three families did not respond. Interviewees' comments for each question are included in Appendices C - I.

### ***Family Descriptions***

Interviews revealed similarities and differences among families as each mother interviewed discussed their family's home schooling experiences and decision to home school. As a way to introduce each family interviewed, the following is a brief description about the characteristics of each family (family names are fictitious).

Indicating academics as the primary reason to home school, Mrs. Adams described home schooling 2 boys ages 10 and 12. She home schools through Option A with her target public school system, although she also participated in a Catholic home school group. She describes this group as a good academic resource, but viewed the group mainly as an opportunity for mothers to gather and talk. Her boys are enrolled in public school this year as Mrs. Adams and her husband believed the boys were becoming too dependent on her.

The Baker's home school 2 children both girls. Her older daughter attended a private parochial school until 4<sup>th</sup> grade until the parents had an unresolved issue with the school administration. The older daughter was home schooled from 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades and has just completed her first year as a freshman in a public high school. Mrs. Baker said this is the first time either child had attended a public school. She has always home



schooled her elementary aged daughter. For 2 years she home schooled through Option B but eventually found the church program too restrictive, so she returned to being monitored through the target public school system.

As a military family the Cooks find home schooling fits their lifestyle. Although Mrs. Cook indicated no reason for home schooling on her questionnaire, she did discuss the mission of her home schooling instruction as teaching the children to love God, to love learning, and to learn how to learn. She home schools one child in high school and one child in middle school. The older child did attend public school at another duty station because the family believed the child needed more socialization to overcome her shyness.

Since their child did not meet the kindergarten age requirement for the 2006-2007 school year, the Dunns decided to home school their daughter. Mrs. Dunn also instructs her 4 year old preschooler. Although she indicated the kindergarten age requirement as her main reason for home schooling, she also cited religious and academic reasons as well. She home schools through an out-of-state Christian academy not recognized by the state and therefore the child is monitored by the target public school system. Mrs. Dunn indicated that she and her husband want their children to eventually attend their church's parochial school, so they will probably be home schooling for the next few years.

Safety was cited as the most important reason by the Evans family for home schooling their children. She described an incident in which a student in her older son's school threatened to shoot him just after the Columbine episode. Not pleased with the private school administration's response to the threat, she and her husband decided their child's safety was too important so she quit her job to home school her 2 children. The

children are 16 and 7 years of age. While being monitored under Option A, she did consider changing her monitoring option to a church exempt organization; however, she found the organization's ideology too strict. She did join a Catholic home school group but again found that organization too strict. She has been happy home schooling through the target public school. Her older son wants to continue home schooling but she may consider enrolling her younger son in public school in the future.

Another military family, the Fishers, home school 4 children twins age 9, and a 6 and 5 year old. On the questionnaire Mrs. Fisher checked other for her reason to home school. She indicated that the family home schools for a myriad of reasons but both religion and academics were cited as primary reasons to home school. As a military family she enjoys the flexibility that home schooling provides as Mr. Fisher is often deployed overseas for several months at a time. This flexibility allows the children more time to spend with their father before and after his deployment. She does belong to a church affiliated home school organization, even though she chose Option A to monitor her home school program.

The Greens are also a military family that home schools 4 children ages 9, 12, 14, and 17. Mrs. Green indicated that the primary reason the family home schools is for religious/moral reasons. However, she also describes an incident in which the family was not pleased with how the public school administration handled 2 situations involving 2 of her children. Not satisfied with the administration's response, the family withdrew the children to home school them. Rather than have 2 children being home schooled and 2 children attending public school, the family decided to home school all 4 children. Mrs. Green said that when the family is sent to their next duty station, more than likely the 2

older children will continue their home schooling and the 2 younger children will be enrolled in private school. The family does not belong to any home schooling group.

Indicating religion as the main reason to home school her daughter, Mrs. Hill also indicated she and her husband were not happy with the quality of their local public school. Mrs. Hill has been home schooling her 9 year old daughter since preschool. She began home schooling through Option A, but became acquainted with a church umbrella group and changed her monitoring option to Option B. She was not pleased with how other parents in the group were appointed to check children's work so she returned to being monitored by the local public school after one year. Presently, she does not belong to any home schooling organization. Her daughter enjoys being home schooled; however, the mother said she may return the daughter to public or private school in the next few years.

### ***Responses to Interview Questions***

The following is a synopsis of conversations with each family for each interview question. I use these responses in Chapter 5 to answer the research questions posed by this study.

#### ***Which is the most important reason you chose to home school?***

Survey results indicated that the majority of respondents home schooled for religious/moral reasons; however, interviews revealed that a family's choice to home school is often affected by other factors. Table 11 summarizes both the primary and secondary reasons families gave as to why they chose to home school. Overall, parent responses to the personal interview provided a more nuanced answer to this question than indicated by the questionnaire results. Mothers typically provided multiple reasons for

the decision to home school, including religious/moral reasons, academic reasons, and convenience. Other concerns involved safety and administrative support at local schools, even at private schools that children had previously attended. Although the mothers acknowledged the challenges of home schooling, none appeared to regret the decision to home school their children.

**Table 11: Reasons to Home School**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Academics</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>School Culture</b>	<b>Safety</b>	<b>Family Needs</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Adams</b>	<b>P</b>		<b>S</b>			
<b>Baker</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>				
<b>Cook*</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>			<b>P</b>	
<b>Dunn</b>	<b>S</b>		<b>S</b>		<b>P</b>	
<b>Evans</b>	<b>S</b>		<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>		
<b>Fisher*</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>			<b>S</b>
<b>Green*</b>		<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>		<b>S</b>
<b>Hill</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>			

**P = Primary reason as indicated on questionnaire**

**S = Secondary reasons culled from interviews**

**\* = military family**

All of the mothers indicated that ‘why they home schooled’ was the number one question asked them on a continual basis. They indicated that their decision to home school is met with skepticism at first, but eventually people come to respect their dedication and efforts to educate their children at home. For example Mrs. Cook said one of her biggest challenges to home school is “people outside my family because they do not respect the time and commitment required to home school.” Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Cook also indicated that they themselves were hesitant to home school at first but gained confidence over time. When discussing her concerns about the kindergarten program and school culture at her son’s school, a friend of Mrs. Adams recommended home schooling.

Once she thought about it, she decided, “I can’t do much harm in trying to home school for one year.” Now, she says, “the experience of learning and being with my children is the best part of home schooling.”

Parents citing religious concerns as their primary reason to home school included the Greens, Bakers, Hills, and Fishers. Although the mothers of each of these families also cited other reasons for home schooling, they emphasized problems they encountered with the subjects and values taught in schools. Mrs. Green described her and her husband’s concern that their children and their beliefs were not being treated with dignity and respect by school administrators. Citing religious/moral reason to home school, Mrs. Hill revealed that both she and her husband were also not pleased with the education and environment of their local public school.

Mrs. Baker who home schooled her daughters stressed that “anything goes” with public school curricula. She believes that certain subjects taught in schools like sex education should be “taught by parents and churches and not by teachers the family and child do not know as they may hold different beliefs than the family does both morally and religiously.” Her fear is that children will not know what is right or wrong in accordance with their family values.

The Fisher’s are a military family, and although she cited both religion and academics as being equally important she indicated that she wants her children to have a “firm grasp on the Bible and its teachings,” and home schooling allows her to intersperse those teachings in her lessons. This type of teaching she says “will not happen in public school.” Mrs. Fisher further stated that “as time goes by I gather more and more reasons for wanting to home school my children.”

Although not indicating a reason on the initial questionnaire, the Cook's, another military family, alluded to religious underpinnings for their decision to home school. She indicated both she and her husband "did not leap blindly into the decision to home school but we had much prayer and research involved." She describes her mission statement for home schooling as "teaching my children to love God, love to learn, and know how to learn."

Mothers who cited concerns about the academic quality of their local public schools sometimes blended academic reasons with religious/moral reasons. Mrs. Dunn expressed a concern with public schools teaching concepts as "fact" though such facts may not have been proven. As a biology major she cited evolution as an example of this type of teaching. Familiar with the continual debate about teaching evolution, she believes schools are close minded about dealing with the question. "Students need to be taught to think out the answers," she argued, "and not have certain things taught as facts which are not necessarily reality." Another of her concerns was the increased testing being done throughout the public school grades which in her opinion diminishes the curriculum as "students are training to take a test." Mrs. Dunn did indicate that she eventually wants her daughter to attend her church's elementary school.

Mrs. Adams became dismayed by remarks made to her by her son's kindergarten teacher. Mrs. Adams became interested in E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge series, and when discussing it with her son's teacher, was told by the teacher that no child could ever be expected to learn or understand a fraction of what was contained in that series. Mrs. Adams has been home schooling her older son since kindergarten and is now home

schooling her younger son. For her academics was the primary reason for home schooling.

Both the Greens and Evans cited safety issues in schools. They described bullying incidents and threats that their children suffered when they had attended school outside of the home. The Evans family was extremely concerned about a private school administrator's inaction when a student threatened to shoot their son. This was especially alarming since the threat occurred in the wake of the Columbine shootings. The Evans notified the school administration about the threat, but in the family's opinion the administration's response to their complaint was to "sweep it under the rug." No disciplinary action was taken against the student, and fearing for their child's safety, Mrs. Evans quit her job to home school her son.

Although citing religious/moral reasons as their main concern, Mrs. Green described 2 separate incidents in which her 2 sons experienced bullying by a classmate and a teacher. The family's younger child was bullied by a classmate into joining a club upon the threat of being "beaten-up." To be in the club, the child had to draw satanic pictures. When questioned about the drawings, the child told his parents what happened. The parents addressed the situation with the public school administration, but it was not resolved to the family's satisfaction. At about the same time their older son was recovering from mononucleosis and during a test he laid his head down and could not finish the test. The teacher called the parents informing them that their son refused to finish the test and referred to him as "lazy" and a "jughead." (The Greens are a military family.) Again, the situation was brought to the school administration's attention but not

resolved. Being very upset with the response by the administration of each school, the family chose to withdraw their children to home school them.

Three of the 8 families were military families. Although these mothers cited a combination of religious/moral and academic reasons for home schooling, they also identified convenience as an important factor since children do not have to constantly change schools. As Mrs. Fisher indicated, “home schooling keeps the children’s education consistent so they are not continually enrolled and removed from schools as their father’s assignment changes. The mothers also said home schooling provides the family with some desired flexibility in their schedule, allowing time for the family to be together prior to a parent’s deployment overseas to duty stations often in Iraq or Afghanistan. Mrs. Cook discussed how home schooling fits their lifestyle because it allows them to travel together and expose their children to different experiences that come available as part of military life.

***Describe your experiences as a home schooling family.***

While each family approaches home schooling in a unique manner, there are many similarities among the target families ranging from motivation of children to the creation of a structured but flexible instructional program. Table 12 summarizes the responses that families gave about their home schooling experiences. Most mothers responded to this question by describing a “typical home schooling day.” Their answers underscored the flexibility that home schooling provided to families, but also identified common structures across families in the time allocated for home schooling and the person with primary responsibility for home schooling children. When asked about the



challenges of home schooling, the most common answer involved motivating children to engage in their work.

**Table 12: Home Schooling Experiences**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Structured program</b>	<b>Keep child focused &amp; motivated</b>	<b>Less Structured program</b>	<b>Open to opportunities</b>	<b>Chores</b>	<b>Mother is main teacher</b>	<b>Father helps at times</b>
Adams	X	X				X	
Baker		X	X	X		X	
Cook	X	X			X	X	
Dunn	X	X		X		X	
Evans	X					X	
Fisher	X	X		X		X	X
Green			X	X		X	X
Hill	X					X	X

Regardless of their reasons for home schooling mothers' descriptions of their home schooling day indicated that each family approaches home schooling in their own unique way. Yet, when asked to describe their experiences, most mothers described a very similar home schooling day. Common to all families was the fact that the mothers are mainly responsible for the day-to-day instruction of the children with 3 fathers participating sporadically with instruction.

The most common words used to describe instructional activities were "structured" or "structured, but flexible." For example both Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Hill clearly said their programs were structured. Mrs. Adams emphasized that the "optimal time for instruction in our household is between 8 AM and noon," and Mrs. Hill also said most of the instruction occurs in the morning although "it can and does stretch into the early afternoon." Both mothers, however, also expressed a willingness to adjust instruction to meet the needs of their children. As Mrs. Hill stated, she tries to allocate

instructional time around each child's best time for instruction, "regardless of whether it is morning or afternoon."

Mrs. Fisher said her instructional program is "structured but with built in flexibility." The children start each day with the Pledge of Allegiance, a prayer, and Bible reading. This family also takes advantage of opportunities that may arise during the day to take field trips. Mrs. Dunn also describes her program as "structured, yet flexible." She "develops a plan for each day and the amount of material to be covered"; however, she said "each day depends upon what is happening in the family and when my daughter gets up and is ready for instruction."

Mrs. Baker called her instructional program "less structured" and "more open to opportunities that may occur in the family or in the children's particular studies." She also indicated that the bulk of the children's work is done during the mornings "as the children tend to become tired and less focused by the afternoon." Mrs. Evans said when she began home schooling her program was structured; however, "it has become a much more relaxed environment with the children taking breaks during instructional time." She further indicated that she and the children enjoy the flexibility home schooling offers especially if the children are "experiencing burn-out." This flexibility allows the children to enjoy a "mental health" day by taking a break from their studies.

As many of the mothers stressed, home schooling takes a lot of time and patience, and 5 out of the 8 mothers described daily challenges they face center around motivating and keeping their children focused. Mrs. Adams described the tension that is often created between the parent and child when the child is having difficulty focusing on their work or just "doesn't want to get up in the morning." As she succinctly said, "I am

always the enforcer.” Mrs. Fisher also reiterates that idea of being the enforcer when she said “being the only teaching voice is difficult because children sometimes resist and don’t want to do what I ask.”

Mrs. Baker stresses the challenges that develop in motivating children in a less structured environment. She says “I often feel that on occasions they listen better to other people” and she attributes this to the fact that she is “always the teacher.” Mrs. Dunn talked about the problems of “keeping children engaged and focused.” As she indicated, “there are times when my daughter is focused, but there are times when she is not focused at all.” To compensate for this Mrs. Dunn readjusts her goals for the day so as “not to frustrate my daughter or myself.”

Mrs. Cook said that “keeping the children on course and focused is a problem when spring fever hits.” She compensates for this by working at a tougher pace during the winter months so her “instruction can be adjusted to lighten the load during bouts of spring fever.” Although Mrs. Evans did not specifically mention the challenge of motivating students, she did describe her home schooling challenge as “revolving around the public school calendar because the boys home school year round except for a 2 to 3 week break in the summer.”

Both Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. Hill also describe having time for themselves as a major challenge. Mrs. Fisher talked about how the role of women has changed over the course of history, and how that is a challenge within itself. As she said, “we are doing so much more as women than women have ever done before in history, so even without home schooling it is difficult.” She talked about the difficulty of “scheduling everything that has to be done – administering to the household, cooking, cleaning, and now home

schooling.” She jokingly said “I don’t get a vacation, so perhaps I should have my husband take leave and I get to go on vacation.” Mrs. Hill shares the challenge of time for herself. She sees her main challenge as “the opportunity to have time to myself as home schooling is a very time consuming undertaking.”

Three mothers talked about how their husbands attempt to help with instruction. Mrs. Fisher described her husband’s involvement with teaching as sporadic. “He uses that teachable moment and may spontaneously just sit down with the children and show them some electronic gadget. The children get very involved as he tells them all about it, or he may take the boys and show them about lawn work.” Mrs. Green’s husband is a military doctor and she described how he utilizes his work to enhance science instruction by helping the children dissect various objects, using skeletons and other medical models, and visits to the hospital. Mrs. Hill said her husband “helps with instruction when his schedule permits.”

***What sorts of resources do you use when home schooling?***

Families utilize a myriad of resources in providing instruction for their children, especially technology and the public library. Table 13 summarizes the resources that mothers said they use when home schooling. Curricular resources varied among families; however, all families utilized technology and identified the public library as a resource.

**Table 13: Curricular Materials and Resources**

Family	Curricular Materials			Other Resources	Technology
	R	NR	C		
Adams	X			Music teacher comes to the house for music lessons, Uses library extensively	Children use computer for games; Mother uses computer to research instructional

					materials
Baker	X		X	Uses the public library	First grader has limited computer use, but time will increase as child gets older; Both children use computer for educational games
Cook			X	Uses the library extensively	Children use the Internet for research
Dunn	X			Uses the library	Kindergartener uses computer for special instructional programs as “ear-aerobics”
Evans		X		Uses the library Children take music lessons	Each child has own computer for research
Fisher		X		Uses the library extensively	Children use a computer instructed spelling program; Use computer for research but are limited to what sites they can use
Green		X		Does not use the library much as they purchase what is needed	Children use computers for research and presentation of work
Hill			X	Uses the library for reading materials	Child uses the computer for research and instructional games

R = Religious curricular materials

NR = Non-religious curricular materials

C = Combination of religious and non-religious curricular materials

Curricular materials and programs ranged from religious curriculum to standard textbooks used in public schools to lessons retrieved from the Internet. No specific curriculum was used by all families or even a majority of families. Although they use prepared curricula, the Adams, Bakers, Greens, and Hills supplement that with their own curriculum after researching and finding a myriad of free online resources. Although it was unclear how much money most families set aside to purchase materials, Mrs. Green indicated that she spends approximately \$3,000 on curriculum materials each year.

The Adams, Bakers, Cooks, Dunns, and Hills use religious curriculum materials but did not necessarily indicate religious/moral as their main reason to home school. For example Mrs. Adams, who home schools for academic reasons, said she uses the Alpha Omega curriculum, but she also uses the Internet “to locate interesting lessons or find help in areas I am not as proficient.” Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Hill, both home schooling for religious reasons, use the A Beka curriculum. Mrs. Baker indicated that she chose the A Beka curriculum for her daughters because “this is what was most familiar to me since I was educated in a private religious school using this curriculum.” While Mrs. Hill uses A Beka, she also incorporates curricular materials from such programs as PACE and Elementary Success. She supplements this with research online stating that “I find a wealth of free curricular materials online for home schooling parents.”

Mrs. Dunn, who home schools her daughter because she missed the cutoff date for kindergarten, is a member of the Faith Christian Academy and only uses their curriculum. Although she home schools for religious reasons, Mrs. Green uses a variety of curricular materials including Lifepac and Saxon math. She also develops her own reading lists for her children from which she generates their spelling and vocabulary skills lessons, writing assignments, and comprehension skills lessons.

Technology plays a part in the instructional program for all the families, and all of the home schooled children use computers at home. Depending on the child’s age level some children use the Internet to research projects, while some children participate in online instructional programs. Mrs. Adams said her sons use technology for researching information. Mrs. Baker’s daughters use the computer to play educational games and to do some research, and Mrs. Cook said her children use the Internet for research. Mrs.

Dunn's daughter uses the computer for an instructional reading program; Mrs. Evans' sons use the Internet for research projects; and Mrs. Fisher's children use a computer instructed spelling program and for limited research. Mrs. Green's children use technology for research and presentation of their projects, whereas Mrs. Hill's children use technology to do research and play educational games. Families with middle and high school children were more likely to give them greater independence in using online resources as part of their educational program, while mothers with elementary age children were careful about the sites children utilize.

Families use public institutions, particularly the public library, to supplement the home schooling experiences of their children. All of the mothers reported using the library extensively to obtain reading materials, to research special projects, or check out certain library books that could be used as textbooks. The only mother who did not use the library extensively was Mrs. Green who indicated that she purchases her children's reading books.

Mothers also said that they looked for ways to create opportunities for their children to interact socially with other students or to receive private instruction in areas traditionally covered by schools (e.g., sports or music). Mrs. Adams said her son had amassed many chapter books and novels and they were "thinking about starting a reading club for younger boys who do not really like to read." Her son wanted to help these children choose books, to discuss the reading with them, and to help encourage their love of reading. He also participates in Scouts and sports activities. Her younger son participates in karate, Scouts, and different sports activities.

Mrs. Evans children participate in music lessons outside the home. Her older son enjoys guitar while her younger son takes piano lessons. Mrs. Fisher’s children participate on county soccer teams, as well as take gymnastics lessons and piano lessons. Mrs. Hill’s daughter dances competitively with a local dance school, and the competitions require the family to travel to different competitions in the surrounding area. Mrs. Dunn indicates that her children participate in t-ball, church choir, and dance lessons; however, she said “they struggle with giving children real world experiences.”

***How long do you think you will continue to home school your children?***

The decision whether to continue to home school their children is one that each family makes according to the particular family situation, family finances, and what is considered to be most beneficial for each child. Table 14 summarizes the answers that mothers gave when asked if they planned to continue home schooling their children. As the table indicates, sometimes families make different decisions for different children (e.g., the Bakers and Greens).

**Table 14: Length of Time to Home School**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Indefinitely</b>	<b>Next few years</b>	<b>Returned to public/private school</b>
Adams			X (2)
Baker		X (1)	X (1)
Cook	X (2)		
Dunn		X (2)	
Evans	X (2)		
Fisher	X (4)		
Green	X (2)	X (2)	
Hill		X (1)	

(19) = Number of children

For many of the families the decision to home school was a difficult question, and for some a decision that is made on a yearly basis. One thing is very evident – the



decision to home school is taken seriously by each family as they attempt to do what is best for each child and the family. Mothers stressed that each of their children are individuals with different interests and personalities, and this influences a child's interest in wanting to attend a public or private school. Some of the children have never been educated in a public or private school, and mothers indicated that their children enjoy home schooling and want to continue. Other children are seen as having some special need such as shyness or the need for greater independence that might be better addressed by attending a formal school. Overall, however, most families were open to sending their children to a public or private school under the right conditions.

Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Fisher indicated that they would consider sending their children to private school but costs are prohibitive. They also said there is little choice in the target area for affordable private high schools, so affordability is an important factor in determining whether to continue to home school. Mrs. Adams is enrolling her two boys in private school for the 2007-2008 school year because she and her husband believe the boys are becoming too dependent upon their mother. Mrs. Green indicated that she and her husband will continue home schooling in this area until they are transferred to the Chicago area, and then the 2 younger children will probably attend a private school and the 2 older children will continue to home school through high school.

Mrs. Fisher further discussed that she and her husband have talked about enrolling their 2 oldest children in public school due to the stress she sometimes experiences when home schooling her children. Their children, however, want to continue to be home schooled. To facilitate the desires of the children, the parents have adjusted their schedules and found ways to deal with the stress and continue home schooling.

Mrs. Dunn indicated she and her husband will enroll their daughter in their church’s elementary school in the next year or so. She is not certain if she will continue home schooling their preschool aged son. The Cooks and Evans indicated they will continue home schooling their children at this time, and Mrs. Hill said her daughter wants to continue being home schooled.

***Why did you decide to use the public schools rather than a church organization to monitor your program?***

Families’ main indication for choosing or returning to Option A monitoring included validation, the belief that school officials provide them with appropriate and supportive feedback, and negative experiences with prior monitoring by a church umbrella group. Table 15 summarizes the answers that families gave about their monitoring decisions. Two families originally chose Option B but changed from that option to Option A after several years.

**Table 15: Monitoring Options**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Option A (LSS)</b>	<b>Option B (Church)</b>	<b>No. of Years in Option B</b>
Adams	X		
Baker	X	X	2
Cook	X		
Dunn	X		
Evans	X	Considered umbrella group at one time	
Fisher	X		
Green	X		
Hill	X	X	1

When asked why families chose the public school or decided to return to the public school monitoring program, the response was unanimous – validation of their program. Mothers liked the idea that there are certain criteria by which a student’s

portfolio is evaluated. When questioned by non-home schooling individuals about the rigor of their home schooling program, families can confidently respond that they are monitored by the public school system and meet state home schooling requirements. “This,” as Mrs. Green said, “quells people’s negative comments toward home schooling.”

Of the 8 mothers interviewed 2 reported that they had once chosen a church umbrella group to do the monitoring, and another mother reported that she had considered doing so. Among the families that had used a church umbrella group, the time spent working with the church group was between one and two years. Reasons for disassociating with the church group varied. Mrs. Evans indicated that her family had contemplated joining a church organization but said the organization’s ideology was too restrictive for them. The organization did not want its parents speaking with anyone associated with the government, and the church organization believed that home schooling students should have their work examined only by other home schooling families.

Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Hill had actually joined a church umbrella group to monitor student work but both found church groups too invasive in regard to the curricular materials that they could use and the range of choices that families could make in determining their own program. Mrs. Hill also noted that she was uncomfortable with the competence of the individuals reviewing her child’s work. Mrs. Adams, while home schooling under Option A, had joined a local church group but found the program was mainly an opportunity for home schooling mothers to gather and talk. She did not find it a helpful academic resource as each family had a different approach which did not necessarily coincide with her home schooling approach.

Mrs. Green said she has friends who participate in local home schooling groups. However, she said “I do not think they serve a purpose as I do not always see the relevance in some of the things the groups do.” She likes developing her own instructional materials.

*Would you utilize any additional services provided by the public school system as part of your home schooling activities?*

The majority of families, whether home schooling for religious/moral or academic reasons, embraced the idea of participating in possible public school offerings. Table 16 summarizes the responses of families as to whether they would utilize other services that might be provided by the public schools.

**Table 16: Public School Resources**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Will use resources</b>	<b>Will not use resources</b>
Adams	X	
Baker	X	
Cook	X	
Dunn	X	
Evans	X	
Fisher	X	
Green		X
Hill	X	

Every mother except one said they would gladly participate in any additional offerings the public school system would provide home schoolers. Mrs. Cook said, “Partnering with the public school would be helpful since we live in a society where we need to work as a team.” Most mothers believe that having the opportunity for the children to enroll in certain classes would be most beneficial as many parents do not always feel qualified to teach subjects (e.g., foreign language). Mrs. Dunn said that sometimes it becomes difficult to find appropriate and affordable outside programs in

which to enroll a child, and by being able to participate in school activities, home schooled students would have additional opportunities to learn as well as socialize. Mrs. Cook and Mrs. Evans suggested that as tax payers who support public schools this would be one way public schools could support them.

Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Cook said local schools could “open their doors” to home schoolers inviting them to attend different events at the schools. Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. Hill reiterated that “such opportunities would be beneficial.”

Mrs. Green, who originally indicated that the family decided to home school their children for religious/moral reasons, adamantly said her family would not participate in public school offerings. However, during the interview, Mrs. Green described 2 bullying incidents that her children had experienced. She expressed strong concerns about safety and believed that administrators often failed to support parents who identified safety issues. These prior experiences with her children and school administrators more than likely influenced her answer.

***What do you think the role of government should be in educating children?***

Families acknowledge the role of government in ensuring an educated citizenry, but equally, if not more important to them, is the family’s role and responsibility to be involved in and guide their children’s education. Table 17 summarizes the mothers’ answers to the final interview question about the role of government in educating children.

**Table 17: Role of Government**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Education - Parental Responsibility</b>	<b>Account-ability</b>	<b>Too Restrictive</b>	<b>Help Home School Family</b>	<b>Too Much Testing</b>	<b>Too Lenient</b>
Adams	X					
Baker	X	X	X			
Cook				X		
Dunn					X	X
Evans	X					X
Fisher	X	X				
Green			X			
Hill		X				

While responses varied, the main theme that continued to surface was the idea that parents have a personal obligation to be involved with and responsible for guiding their children’s education. As Mrs. Adams said, “education is a parental responsibility and too often parents delegate the education of their children to the schools.” Mrs. Baker reiterated that thought saying “many parents do not take an active part in their children’s education.”

Mrs. Evans further suggested society is experiencing a “meltdown” since both parents work and children are left on their own having little structure in their lives. This leads to children becoming disrespectful to adults and teachers. Several suggested that government has become overly involved in education because parents look to the schools to solve problems rather than accepting full responsibility for their family.

Mrs. Green further suggested that the government could assist working parents by helping them to finance appropriate before and after care programs. She acknowledged that some schools do offer mentoring programs; however, she believed such programs do not necessarily reach the children that need the guidance the most. In describing the need

for mentoring programs, she did not appear to be describing the need for her children, but the need for children of other families. Other mothers critiqued the role of government, arguing that government policies were too restrictive, emphasized too much testing, or did not require enough discipline in schools.

Mrs. Fisher described the tension that many families expressed in discussing the role of government in educating children. She, like most of the families interviewed, acknowledged the government's legitimate interest in the education of children, but, she tempered that interest with the interest of parents. She said that she certainly understands the reasons behind the compulsory attendance laws, but "I don't want to send my children to school because I think I can do it better than the state." "Yet," she acknowledged, "the state has to have some sort of way of knowing that everyone is being educated." In her words, "There should be government guidelines concerning education, but parents should retain the right to decide what is best for their children."

### **Conclusion**

Option A families represent a cross-section of reasons for turning to home schooling including home schooling for religious/moral reasons, even though Option A represents the non-church affiliated option for monitoring home schooling under Maryland law. Target families expressed a strong commitment to fulfilling what they see as an obligation to raise and educate their children, yet in general they appreciate the established home schooling regulations that require them to participate in an approval process operated by the public schools. They believe that this provides public validation of their instructional programs.

Families, regardless of their reason to home school in the target population, noted that some subjects are easier to teach than others, and they would welcome the opportunity for their children to participate in classes and other offerings by the public school system. This interest in public school offerings is a reflection of a trend nationwide in which home schooling families are partnering with local public schools in order to take advantage of enrolling students in certain academic classes and extracurricular activities. Although still a minority of the public, roughly one-third of the American public favors such opportunities and in various states home schoolers are already taking advantage of such offerings (Howell & West, 2007).



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Home schooling is becoming a popular education alternative to public and private education. Estimates of the home schooling population vary between 1.1 and 2.4 million children (Magnuson, 1999; Marech, 2006) or as much as 4% of the public school population. Statistics kept by advocacy groups and government agencies also suggest that the population of home schooling families is growing nationally (Bauman, 2001). Although statistics specific to Maryland are limited, the Maryland home school population has grown from approximately 2,296 in 1990 to over 24,329 students in the 2005-2006 school year according to the Maryland General Assembly's Department of Legislative Services, and it continues to grow (Sarris, 2006). Opening a dialogue between home schooling families and the Maryland public school officials could foster a partnership that could be beneficial to both entities. Minimally, such a partnership would help Maryland policy makers and school leaders anticipate the changes in the home schooling population and possible services that might benefit both parties.

#### **Discussion**

##### ***Overview of Findings***

Analysis of the questionnaire and interview responses indicates that the characteristics of the target home school population are similar though not identical to the national sample identified by the 2003 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey. As shown in Table 9, page 91, similar proportions of families said that they home schooled for religious or academic reasons, though a larger proportion of families identified other reasons in the national survey. However, based on the interviews with

families who participated in the study the additional reasons cited by national survey participants may have more to do with differences in the questionnaire formats than differences in the beliefs and values of families. These interviews indicated that similar to the national sample, families in the study considered multiple factors in deciding to home school their children.

What is most important for the purpose of this study is that families selecting Option A are diverse and likely to include a substantial proportion of families home schooling their children for religious, academic, and related reasons. These families believe that the public school option has significant advantages over the church-affiliated option for monitoring their children's work. Specifically, the families that participated in the interviews believed that the public schools provided useful and appropriate feedback and validated their home schooling decisions. Moreover, families that switched from Option B to Option A often described monitoring from church-affiliated associations as overly restrictive and academically weak.

The home schooling population in the study appeared to have fewer and younger children than the national population of home schoolers, a difference that might reflect demographic differences between families residing in the target school district and families nationally. Although not the focus of the study the interview data indicated that a surprisingly large proportion of home schoolers in the area may be military families (roughly one-third of the families interviewed). There are no national or state studies of the home schooling practices of military families, but the reasons for home schooling given by the families in this study suggest that flexibility and convenience may make home schooling especially attractive to military families. Given the concentration of

military installations and related industries in the state, this could make military families an important source of home schoolers in Maryland.

This may be especially significant as this study can alert state policy makers about possible increases in the state's home schooling population over the next 3 to 4 years due to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) report. It is estimated that BRAC is slated to create approximately 60,000 new jobs and bring an estimated 28,000 additional new households to the state (Click, 2007). These new families may include many civilian and military families who home school their children. These families may come from states where public schools offer a variety of educational opportunities. John Cloud and John Morse (2001) indicate that 1 in 5 home schooled students is enrolled in at least one public or private school class and many are participating in extracurricular activities. It will be important for state education policy makers to understand this demographic so that schools can prepare for a possible influx of home schooling families.

A substantial proportion of home schooling families are utilizing various services from their local public school systems ranging from participation in classroom instruction to extracurricular activities. My interview data indicates that the target home schooling population is also interested in similar services; therefore, state education policy makers may want to consider this interest by the state's home schooling population, especially given the likely increase in this population due to BRAC. Policy makers should begin efforts to analyze the home schooling population's desires and needs and re-evaluate the state's home school policies and regulations in light of what they may find.

### ***Research Questions***

1. What are the reasons Maryland home schooling families choose Option A? Why do some religiously motivated families choose Option A?

Maryland home schooling families choose Option A because many believe in the concept that the state should set educational guidelines by which home schooled students should be judged in order to ensure an educated citizenry. Having a student's portfolio judged acceptable by local school district representatives provides parents validation for their instructional program and their children's progress. This reason was espoused by all of the home schooling families.

As several families home schooling for religious/moral reasons in Option A indicated, they found some church and church school organizations too demanding or rigid in their home schooling ideology. While families subscribed to religious curricula and religious teachings in their instructional program, they wanted to develop their own programs and assessments rather than being subject to those prescribed by church organizations. Option A gave them the opportunity to create independently their own curriculum, and yet it provided them an assessment tool to validate student progress.

A majority of the survey respondents indicated religious/moral reasons for home schooling, yet the families also expressed concerns about academic quality as well. This finding is similar to that reported by Kurt Bauman (2001), "If attitudinal responses are to be believed, home schooling is not primarily a religious phenomenon, although religion is important" (p. 8). A similar finding for those interviewees indicating academics as their main reason for home schooling was also true. Religion did play a part in their decision to home school, but academic quality was often a primary factor as well.

The most important finding from the perspective of this study is that a diverse population of home schoolers in Maryland, at least as judged by the home schoolers who participated in this study, choose to be monitored by the public school system. These families saw a distinct advantage to selecting Option A, even when their primary reason for home schooling was for religious/moral purposes. The public school system provided legitimacy for their home school programs that could not be provided, at least in their minds, by the church-affiliated organizations. Contrary to the popular literature, which often describes home schooling families as against any involvement with government agencies (Cloud & Morse, 2001; Cordes, 2000; Halle, 2002; Seelhoff, 1999), these families largely embraced the services provided by the state while maintaining their strong interest in shaping the educational experiences of their children.

2. What services do Maryland home schooling families want made available to them through their local public school system?

The vast majority of home schooled families interviewed would be interested in the opportunity to enroll their children in classes which they do not feel comfortable with or have the expertise to teach such as higher level sciences, mathematics, and foreign language courses. Presently, families seek instructional programs that provide various lesson plans or resources to deliver instruction in more difficult subject areas. As several families indicated, they are taxpayers and financially support their local school systems. In their opinion it would be very appropriate for schools to share curriculum and resources to assist families in teaching such classes.

This coincides with the 2003 NCES survey which indicated that approximately 200,000 home schooled students or approximately one-fifth of all home schooled

children nationwide are enrolled part-time in public school classes (Cloud & Morse, 2001). The 2007 Education Next survey also found that approximately 70% of the public who know a home schooling family support an expansion of public school offerings for home schooled students including participation in sports activities and selected classes (Howell & West, 2007). Of the 8 families interviewed 7 enthusiastically embraced the idea of public schools offering families opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and classroom instruction.

### **Recommendations**

Regardless of the state implications of BRAC over the next few years, the majority of interviewees in my study are open to opportunities being made available to them by their local public schools. Although the questionnaire and interviews involved a small number of home schooling families in the state, the finding is consistent with the findings reported by the 2003 NCES national home schooling survey and the more recent 2007 survey by Education Next. These studies indicate that a substantial proportion of home schooling families are interested in supplementing their home programs with services provided by local public schools and the state. However, far less is known about the feasibility of providing these services, particularly in ways that protect the desire of home schooling families to shape the educational experiences of their children and control the content of curriculum.

Offering an array of services to home schooling families would be both a challenge and a departure from Maryland home schooling policy. The research design for this study does not provide strong evidence that the state should do so, but it does provide evidence that it may be time to explore greater collaboration in the provision of state-

sponsored services to home schooled children. As stated above, a substantial proportion of the home schooled population in the study acknowledge the state's interest in the education of children, even among families that home school their children for religious/moral reasons. Moreover, these families characterize positively current services provided by the state and express interest in additional services. Although the implications of providing additional services are unknown, the state does have procedures for reviewing education policies, identifying implications, and considering an appropriate course of action.

If the state decided to re-examine its home schooling policies, state policy makers would need to examine and understand the capacity of local schools to provide additional services, the present interests of the state's home school population, as well as the future demands that might result from national legislation such as BRAC. As in any proposed policy re-examination, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) begins with stakeholder meetings. Stakeholder meetings bring together all interested parties involved in an issue in an effort to open dialogue, gather testimony, and formulate policy recommendations to be presented to the State School Board for approval. With this in mind, I recommend that MSDE begin a process to foster dialogue between home schoolers and the public school systems about the state's current home schooling policies and the possibility of offering additional services such as participation in classes and extracurricular activities to home schooling students. To accomplish this recommendation, I offer a series of steps to bring about this dialogue.

### *Step 1*

Prior to any stakeholder meetings, MSDE could conduct a statewide survey of all home schooling families. A meeting of all home school directors, representatives of the Nonpublic School Approval Branch (NSAB) of MSDE, and appointed officials of MSDE could be convened to provide guidance in developing such a survey. From this group a steering committee could be appointed by the State Superintendent of Schools consisting of home school directors, NSAB members, and MSDE officials charged with two tasks: 1) preparing, disseminating, and compiling responses to a statewide survey of home school families and home school organizations, and 2) investigating policies of states that have allowed home school students an opportunity to participate in activities such as dual enrollment, extracurricular activities, and the utilization of other school resources.

Beginning the dialogue with the home school directors, their superintendents, and local school boards about a possible partnership with home school families may be the linchpin necessary to assure a productive and positive working relationship between all stakeholders. Home school directors often have the most direct information about home schooling families, or at least families that choose Option A in the state. It is through each school district's home school office that parents receive their home school registration packet, have their questions answered, and have their children's portfolios reviewed. By consulting with the home school directors and local school administrators, state officials can utilize their local expertise, capitalize on their local knowledge about this population, and utilize the rapport and trust that has developed between the home school directors and home schooling families to gather relevant data. The directors and their administrators are the gatekeepers to this population. Without a productive dialogue



and agreement to cooperate and collaborate at this stage, directors and school administrators may be resistant to change regardless of the benefits.

NSAB is also important to this process as it is the MSDE branch responsible for registering church exempt organizations and church schools that monitor Option B home schooling families. Like home school directors, NSAB is the first contact these organizations and schools have with the state, and it will be the responsibility of this branch to encourage participation in data gathering and eventually disseminate information about survey results to home schooling families not associated with the public school system. Therefore, NSAB needs to be kept abreast of and participate in all discussions about possible policy changes so they will be able to answer questions from church exempt organizations.

Access to the home school population in the state is straightforward, at least in theory, since all home schooling families are required to register with the state 15 days prior to beginning home instruction. Additionally, home schooling families must verify each year that they are continuing to home school. Each school district's home school director will be an essential link to the Option A families, as in most instances this is the person with whom the families have established a relationship. Home school directors in each school district could assume the lead in distributing and collecting the surveys from Option A families, and NSAB could disseminate and collect the surveys to Option B church and school exempt home school organizations. However, as documented in the literature, some families may be less willing to participate in surveys (Cloud & Morse, 2001; Cordes, 2000; Halle, 2002; Seelhoff, 1999), especially those that select Option B. The cooperation and collaboration with NASB may be essential if these families are to be

assured of the state's genuine interest in understanding their home schooling challenges and interests.

In developing the survey questions the steering committee could refer to previously administered national survey questions such as those in the 1999 and 2003 NCES surveys. The statewide survey could be designed to gather background information about home families including but not limited to parent's occupations, income range, ages, grade levels, gender, years home schooling, and home school organizations in which the families participate. In addition families should be given a list of choices concerning what types of services and resources they would be interested in utilizing such as public school library use, access to textbooks and curriculum, parent participation in public school professional development workshops, student enrollment in specific classes, and student participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., sports teams).

Once collected, all the information could be analyzed by the steering committee. The goal of the steering committee would be to develop proposed recommendations based on survey findings and information gleaned from other state home school programs. A report of their findings and recommendations could be made available to stakeholders prior to regional meetings with school administrators, district superintendents, home schooling families, and church organizations.

Survey information would provide state officials and public school administrators with essential background information about the home schooling population in each district as well as vital information about the range of services families would be interested in receiving. School districts would then have more complete information about the number of home schooling families in their district, what their interests are in

additional services, and a basis for determining how offering such resources would affect school personnel and resources. Home schooling families and church organizations also would find the survey information useful for it would give them a better sense of who is home schooling in the state and the types of services desired. Regional meetings with all stakeholders would give families an opportunity to discuss the results and clarify survey findings.

Information regarding other state programs would allow the steering committee to provide feedback to school district administrators and MSDE officials about how public school offerings were made available to home school families in other states. For example some states may have phased in various resources so as not to overwhelm state education budgets and local school district personnel. This information would allow the steering committee and the local public school administrators an opportunity to examine examples of the possibilities and pitfalls associated with providing additional services to home schooling families. A careful review of these policies would enhance any future policy recommendations that would come out of this process.

## ***Step 2***

Upon completion of the steering committee's report, MSDE could conduct its first meeting with the members of the steering committee and all public school district superintendents and their designees. The meeting would be designed to give public school administrators an overview of state findings and possible revisions of current home schooling policies, provide smaller workshops for school administrators to ask questions and voice concerns, and finally give superintendents an opportunity to propose additional recommendations or modifications.

This meeting would be an opportunity for there to be discussions about local and statewide home schooling populations, as well as discussions about alternative policy frameworks to provide additional services and encourage stronger partnerships between the public schools and the home schooling community. As Michael Romanowski (2001) and George Pawles (2001) have discussed, public school officials are not always cognizant of particular home schooling regulations or the home schooling populations that they serve in their district. They may assume that home schooling families do not trust the public schools, that home schooled children do not possess the social skills necessary to interact with other children, or that home schooled children are not academically prepared to succeed in their schools. Discussions about the survey results might clarify misunderstandings where they exist and provide a foundation for dialogue and innovative policies and programs.

As the literature suggests public school officials are sometimes confused about why parents choose to home school their children. This can lead to a confrontational attitude of “us” v. “them,” especially since home schooling diminishes enrollments and reduces the level of financial assistance from the state. The same may be said for home schooling families though (Pawles, 2001 & Romanowski, 2001), especially since home schooling families sometimes argue that because they pay taxes the public schools should provide services to them without restrictions. This contention, of course, addresses a broader issue of how to distribute and support educational opportunities within states and across the nation in a democratic society. Addressing this issue is made more difficult by perceptions of “us” v. “them,” whether they are held by public school administrators or home schooling families. Regardless, there are potential benefits to both schools and

home schooling families in exploring a stronger partnership and more collaborative relationship.

According to the March/April 2001 Harvard Education Letter many schools across the country are receiving additional state funding by offering home schooled students an opportunity to participate in specific classes (Faber, 2001). For example states such as Kansas, California, Colorado, and Washington, which did not offer home schooling students any services in the past, are now offering additional educational opportunities for these students. Public school educators in these states are encouraging open communication with home schooling families in an attempt to shed an adversarial atmosphere and forge new alliances. Moreover, home schooling families are seeing the advantages associated with these new partnerships through additional services and the recognition that their children may eventually return to the public school system (Magnuson, 1999). As a part of the proposed meetings with school administrators, officials from other states could be invited to discuss their partnerships with home schooling families, the mutual interests that helped to forge these partnerships, and the policies that have been implemented to make programs work.

### ***Step 3***

MSDE could conduct a similar meeting with the home schooling population. This could be done on a regional basis in order to accommodate the large number of home schooling families within the state that would be affected by possible changes in home schooling policies. At these meetings the steering committee's report could be disseminated and discussed in smaller forums to garner input from this group and clarify results.

As many researchers have indicated (Faber, 2001; Longbottom, 2007; Dao, 2005; Jacobsen, 1997; Cordes, 2005), the harshest criticism for receiving additional services often comes from those families belonging to conservative home schooling groups. These organizations fear that once home schoolers accept such opportunities on a large scale, they will become another entitlement group subject to government regulations. However, Cloud and Morse (2001) indicate that 1 in 5 home schooled students is enrolled in at least one public or private school class and many are participating in extracurricular activities. While this conservative population of home schoolers may provide a formidable obstacle to developing a stronger partnership in Maryland, it is also likely that there is a substantial population of home schoolers willing to explore such a relationship.

The steering committee's report and these regional meetings would provide an overall view of home schooling families in the state. It would give families in both Options A and B an opportunity to meet and share their home schooling experiences. Home schooling families could further articulate their desires for additional services, discuss the steering committee's recommendations, learn how other states have created programs to offer services to home schooled families, and add to or modify the proposed recommendations. Although meetings of this scope are likely to be logistically difficult and potentially contentious, they provide the best opportunities for creating a dialogue about home schooling and how to integrate it more fully into a statewide system of public and private education.

#### ***Step 4***

Following these two meetings, MSDE could sponsor regional meetings for all stakeholders to include home schooling families, public school administrators, school

board representatives, MSDE officials, and home school organizations. The agenda for these meetings would be to present all the findings from the previous two meetings in conjunction with that of the original steering committee report and proposed recommendations. These meetings would provide a forum to begin a dialogue between all stakeholders as they begin discussing the proposed steering committee recommendations as well as any new recommendations and modifications voiced at the prior two meetings.

Opening a dialogue between all stakeholders, as suggested by Romanowski (2001), Pawles (2001), and Peter Magnuson (1999), has the potential of maximizing every child's educational potential, the goal of a truly democratic educational system. Such a dialogue and partnership would be an opportunity for both groups to shed negative attitudes and learn from each other. This exchange of ideas could foster better understanding for all of the parties involved as well as foster greater consideration of mutual interests and alternative policies and practices.

#### *Step 5*

From inclusive stakeholders' meetings, a policy committee could be appointed representative of all parties attending the regional meetings. This committee would be charged with reviewing the proposed recommendations and modifications discussed at the various stakeholders meetings and formulating draft recommendations and policy changes to present to the governor, the state's legislative bodies, and the State School Board. These draft recommendations would include implications for state funding, descriptions of additional services and activities that could be made available to the home schooling community, and estimations of the local impact of the recommendations.

In conjunction with developing recommendations for policy changes and assessments of the consequences of changes, the committee could develop guidelines for the implementation of such policies. As other states have experienced, the expansion of services raises the question of when these services must be provided and who has a right to access them (Northwest Regional Educational Library, 2000). For example, criteria may be required to determine how vacant seats in public school classrooms would be made available to home school students, the criteria to be used for home schoolers to participate in extracurricular activities or on interscholastic athletic teams, and the criteria for how curriculum and other resources would be made available to families. Another criteria might be that the public schools will not purchase additional materials to supplement or implement a parent's particular curriculum or religious teachings (Research: What Do Homeschoolers Want, 2000). These guidelines would need to be included in any proposed recommendations to legislators and the State Board of Education prior to offering any services, resources, or activities.

Regardless of the outcome of these meetings, they would provide a valuable opportunity to open a dialogue between all parties and to strengthen communication between home schooling families and public school officials. This process would give school administrators an opportunity to learn about this constituency and how other states have accommodated their educational needs. Home schooling parents would have an opportunity to learn more about the home schooling community across the state as well as become better acquainted with their public schools and MSDE. Greater collaboration could begin with public schools simply developing a mailing list of home schooling families in their district and including them in newsletters about events at the school so



that home schooling families could be informed about and participate in different school events.

Through such a process, school and state officials could come to realize what a resource home schooling families could be to their local public school system, and home schooling families could come to realize that school and state officials are valuable resources in developing successful home school programs for their children. By actively seeking to engage these families directly with their local public schools, public school administrators and staff could benefit from home schooling parents volunteering in classrooms and after school programs, participating in school activities, and supporting local school referendums. State policies could also help to support these additional services by providing schools with pro-rated support for involving home schooled children in their curricular programs and extracurricular activities. Such a partnership could be beneficial for all.

### **Conclusions**

The following section discusses the limitations and strengths of the study, suggests future areas of research, provides an example of some of the issues that might accompany extending services to home schoolers, and ends with my personal reflections on the study and its results.

#### ***Limitations of the Study***

Not being able to attend the portfolio review sessions, I had to rely on the director of the home schooling office and his associates to disseminate the questionnaire packet. Of the approximate 300 families who participated in the portfolio reviews, 120 received the packet. The survey response rate was 39% for parents who received packets and 16%

for families eligible to participate in the study. Although home schooling families provided me with substantial information about their beliefs and practices, these results and recommendations are based on a relatively small proportion of home schooling families in the participating school district.

The questionnaire garnered information about the characteristics of the home schooling population and their major reason to home school. It assisted in classifying families into categories according to their reasons to home school, but in-depth information is limited to the 8 families, entirely mothers, that agreed to be interviewed. Moreover, because of logistical problems, some mothers had to be interviewed via the telephone rather than in person. I believe the questionnaire would have been more helpful if families were asked whether they would be interested in receiving additional services from their local public schools rather than limiting this question to just those families that participated in the interview process. Adding that question would have provided additional information about the interests and desires of the target population.

I surveyed and interviewed only families that selected Option A. I did not survey or interview families that selected Option B, church exempt organizations, or public school administrators and teachers. Although I recommend that these groups be included in a statewide discussion of home schooling policies, my study provides no information about how they might respond to such an overture or how they compare in their beliefs to families that chose Option A. This is a fundamental limitation of the study, though one, as I argue later, that could be addressed with further research.

Finally, the interviews with home schooling families did not explore in-depth the nature and conditions under which they would participate in publicly supported services.

Questions were general and identified services without identifying any costs that home schooling families might be willing to bear to gain access to curricular programs and extracurricular activities. It is quite possible that families would be more reticent about participation if they had to pay a fee for services, adapt their own programs to school schedules, or sacrifice some control over their children's educational experiences. Such possibilities should be kept in mind when considering the implications of these findings.

### *Strengths of the Study*

Gregory Cizek (as quoted in Archer, 1999), a former education professor at the University of Toledo and now an associate faculty member at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, suggests that the best way to ascertain the needs and desires of the home schooling population is to ask them directly. My study's questionnaire and personal interviews collected data directly from the target home schooling population, and it identified background characteristics about these families in order to discover what services families would be interested in receiving from their local public school system as they continue to home school. National surveys by NCES (1999; 2003) and Education Next (2007) indicate that a trend is developing in which typical home schooling families are not necessarily home schooling for religious reasons, but a combination of reasons, and these families are interested in utilizing resources from their local public schools. As no research like this has been undertaken with the home schooling population in Maryland, my study sheds light on the concerns and expectations of this population for possible future action by state and local education policy makers.

Delving into families' home schooling experiences was another opportunity to compare this population with other researchers' descriptions of home schooling families'

experiences nationwide. Interviewees were forthright and candid about the positive and negative aspects of home schooling, their concerns about their children's education, their concerns about the state of public education, and the daily challenges each family faces as they home school. As illustrated in the literature these families stressed that home schooling is a difficult but rewarding experience. Their unanimous comment is that home schooling is not for everyone, but that they did not regret their decision to home school (Saulny, 2006; Halle, 2002; Lyman, 1998; Cloud & Morse, 2001; Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1998; Jeub, 1994; Hill; 1996).

In the next 3 to 4 years the state will experience new job and household growth due to BRAC. A potentially important finding of this study is that military families may be especially inclined to home school their children. Completing this study prior to the implementation of BRAC may highlight the possibility of more home schooling families moving into the area from other states in which they participated in services from their local public schools. State policy makers and school administrators should consider the possible demand for services by these new families who may want to utilize existing or additional public school services as part of their home schooling programs.

### ***Suggested Future Research***

If home schooling families nationwide are becoming more interested in taking advantage of services and opportunities offered by their local school systems, the state should consider exploring the interests of the states' home schooling population. Through an investigation of the home schooling population as described in this chapter, state policy makers could become more informed about home schooling families and have an opportunity to explore alternative policies and practices. This study provided an initial

step in surveying the home schooling population, but a more comprehensive survey project would provide more detailed information about the entire home schooling population and possible variations across the state in their beliefs and practices.

Just as the NCES is periodically surveying families about general education issues and home schooling, MSDE could also develop a protocol by which it periodically surveys the home schooling population. Such surveys would help keep MSDE and local public school administrators abreast of the changing demographics of this group as well as their changing needs and desires. If the state should choose to offer public school services to this group, it would also need to monitor the delivery of those services. State survey information would also aid the state in understanding any trends that may be developing within the state and compare such trends to national trends.

This study also did not investigate the beliefs of state policy makers and local school administrators about the home schooling population or the possibility of providing additional services to them. As suggested in the recommendation and steps outlined above, a meaningful partnership between the home schooling population and public schools cannot be forged without the support of the local home school directors, superintendents, and school boards. Surveys of local school administrators could provide useful information that would help to anticipate conflicts, identify mutual interests, and inform future discussions about services to the home schooling population in Maryland.

Finally, if the state should determine that it would expand services to the home schooling population, well-designed evaluations of new programs would provide useful information to policy makers, educators, and the home schooling population about participation in these services, the costs of additional services, and the potential benefits

to schools and families. By focusing research on innovative programs and practices, the state could identify those that are most cost-effective as models for other school districts throughout the state.

### ***The Challenges and Possibilities of Developing a Partnership***

I have spoken positively about the possibility of developing a stronger partnership between the home schooling population in the state and the public school system in Maryland. Although I believe that such a partnership is possible, if not necessary, neither the challenges nor the possibilities associated with developing one should be underestimated. Recent events in the Baltimore area demonstrate these challenges and possibilities.

In September 2007 the Baltimore County Public School System announced that it plans to “test a full-time online school, providing certified teachers and Web-based lesson plans for free, starting this week with home schooled students” (Davis, 2007, page 1). The school is partnering with Connections Academy to implement this program believed to be the first of its kind in the state. Home school organizations, however, are already warning Baltimore County home school families to steer clear of this offering because home school students will be expected to take all statewide assessment tests. With approximately 3,000 home schooling students in the county, home school organizations are suggesting that the county’s motivation is purely financial as it will reap funds for each student enrolled. Although this is a step in the direction of offering home schooled students public school resources, it has become immediately controversial.

Nonetheless, many states presently offer virtual education opportunities to home schooled students, with approximately 22 states having established virtual schools and 16

states offering at least one cyber charter school (Watson & Ryan, 2006). States like California, Washington, and Florida (Lines, 2001) have implemented various programs including enrollment in charter schools and virtual schools to home schooling students without requiring them to fulfill all of the requirements associated with full public school enrollments. The literature suggests, along with the results from this study, that home schooling families want to retain control over their children's education, but they also require assistance in teaching more difficult subjects and creating a well-rounded educational program for their children. Although the Baltimore plan provides new opportunities for families to gain access to school services, it does not provide the flexibility or input from parents found in programs in other states.

Rather than one county offering such a program, MSDE could investigate a statewide approach to providing additional educational opportunities to the home schooling population. For example Maryland home school students currently can not participate in the only online program MSDE offers. The Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities program, which is an online virtual learning program, is only for students enrolled in their local public high schools. The program offers students an opportunity to enroll in a limited offering of online classes for high school credit when students have scheduling conflicts, courses are not available to them, or courses are not offered due to low class enrollment. Additionally, Maryland home school students are not offered the opportunity to participate in charter schools and the state does not offer a virtual charter school program since there is a provision in the charter school law requiring that students be physically present on school premises (Watson & Ryan, 2006).

Of course, for any plan to be successful, home school leaders, policy makers, and educators will have to address the distrust that exists within both the home schooling population and public educators. However, Maryland has the infrastructure to develop programs similar to those that have been launched in other states. Thus, MSDE may want to investigate the possibility of expanding its virtual online program to include home schooled students as well as exploring the possibility of offering a virtual charter school in the state. If MSDE would choose to pursue the virtual charter school concept, it would have to convince state lawmakers that the provision in the charter school law requiring physical attendance should be amended. The recommendations that I describe could be the basis for a statewide discussion that would create the foundation for these types of changes in Maryland's home schooling policies and practices.

### **Final Thoughts**

Researching the phenomenon of home schooling over the past several years has been a fascinating experience as I have watched new trends develop within the home schooling population. When I first began my research in 1998 the concept was somewhat controversial and not well understood. I encountered individuals who had never home schooled nor had been acquainted with a home schooling family but insisted that home schooling was unacceptable. Such individuals occasionally were public school educators. As a former private school principal I met home schooling families interested in placing their children in a small private school setting to prepare them to return to public school, or as in a few cases the family could no longer afford the mother staying at home to instruct the children. These initial interactions helped to develop my interest in studying



home schooling families and the possibility of a more collaborative relationship between these families and the public school system.

Public attitudes toward home schooling have been changing over the past years, and home schooling has become a more acceptable alternative to public education. As Jack Klenk, director of the Office of Non-Public Education, U. S. Department of Education said, “It is so much more common than it was 10 years ago or 20 years ago or even 3 years ago for people to know someone who is home-schooling” (As quoted in Kocian, 2007, p. 1). Even colleges and universities are expanding their admissions policies to accommodate home schooled students. HSLDA established Patrick Henry College, a college for home schooled students, in 1999, and as the college has grown, more such colleges may be in the offing. Home schooling will more than likely continue to grow as parents express concerns about safety issues and increased testing in public schools.

However, research on home schooling continues to be basically descriptive providing only glimpses into the home schooling experience, as research on this population of children and their families is neither systematic nor developed. As Cizek (as quoted in Archer, 1999) points out, this research is often undertaken by individuals who have never home schooled, and it may be the first and last research they complete on home schooling. As I reviewed the literature and accumulated resources on home schooling, this concept held true. Much of what we know about the home schooling population, their experiences, and their needs is anecdotal or slanted by political ideology or religious beliefs. If we are to delve more fully into the phenomenon of home

schooling, there will need to be a more sustained and systematic effort toward doing so. I hope that this study has taken a step in that direction.

Educators want all children to receive the best education available, and often, I think, people lose sight of the fact that home schooling families want the exact same thing. Partnerships may be a possible avenue for public schools to make different opportunities available to home schooling families while at the same time respecting the family's interest in guiding and controlling their child's educational experience. What I have proposed in this study is opening a dialogue between the home schooling families, local school leaders, and state policy makers. The results of such a dialogue could be a more integrated and diverse state education system capable of providing the best educational opportunities available to home schoolers and public schoolers alike.

## APPENDIX A

### *COMAR 13A.10.01.01*

#### .01 Home Instruction Program.

A. Purpose. The purpose of this regulation is to establish a procedure to be used by the superintendent of each local school system to determine if a child participating in a home instruction program is receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age.

#### B. Written Agreement.

(1) A parent or guardian who chooses to teach his or her child at home shall initially sign a statement on a form prescribed by the State Department of Education which:

(a) Indicates consent to the requirements set forth in §§C, D, and E of this regulation; and

(b) Shall be submitted to the local superintendent at least 15 days before the beginning of a home instruction program.

(2) Annual Verification. Annually thereafter, before the beginning of the school year, a parent or guardian shall verify the continuation of home schooling for his or her child with the local school superintendent or with the supervising nonpublic school or institution described in Regulation .05 of this chapter.

(3) Change in Status. A parent or guardian shall notify the local school superintendent or the supervising nonpublic school or institution described in Regulation .05 of this chapter if a change occurs in the home school status of a child during the school year.

#### C. Instruction Program. The home instruction program shall:

(1) Provide regular, thorough instruction in the studies usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age;

(2) Include instruction in English, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, health, and physical education; and

(3) Take place on a regular basis during the school year and be of sufficient duration to implement the instruction program.

D. Educational Materials. A parent or guardian who chooses to teach a child at home shall maintain a portfolio of materials which:

(1) Demonstrates the parent or guardian is providing regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the areas specified in §C(1) and (2);

(2) Includes relevant materials, such as instructional materials, reading materials, and examples of the child's writings, worksheets, workbooks, creative materials, and tests;

(3) Shall be reviewed by the local superintendent or the superintendent's designee at the conclusion of each semester of the local school system at such times as are mutually agreeable to the local superintendent or designee and the parent or guardian.

E. A parent or guardian shall agree to permit a representative of a local school system to review the portfolio of educational materials, discuss the instructional program, and observe instruction provided that all of the following requirements are met:

(1) The review is at a time and place mutually agreeable to the representative of the local school system and the parent or guardian;

(2) The purpose of the review is to ensure that the child is receiving regular, thorough instruction as set forth in §C;

(3) There are not more than three reviews during a school year.

F. Additional Requirements. A local school system may not impose additional requirements for home instruction programs other than those in these regulations.

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire

1. Which is the most important reason you chose to home school?  
 More for religious/moral reasons  
 More for academic reasons  
 More for some other reasons (please explain)
2. How many child(ren) in your household have been (or are currently being) home schooled?  
 1       2       3       More than 3
3. What are the ages of the child(ren) currently being home schooled?
4. Have you or any other adult in the family ever been home schooled?  
 Yes, if so for how long? \_\_\_\_\_  
 No
5. Do you belong to any home schooling organizations, and if so which ones?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 No
6. Home schooling families have the option to having their program monitored by the public schools or monitored by a church organization. Have you ever had your program monitored by a church organization?  
 Yes, if so for how long? \_\_\_\_\_  
 No

7. Would you be willing to participate in an interview with me to discuss your decision to use the public school system to monitor your home schooling program and your home schooling experiences?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes (provide your name, email, and telephone number)

\_\_\_\_\_ No

## Appendix C

### Which is the most important reason you chose to home school?

<i>Families</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Adams Family	<p>Academics was clearly indicated by this mother as their family's reason to home school. Her older son began his education in a private Catholic school kindergarten; however she became disenchanted with his teacher and the school. She was reading E.D. Hirsh's Core Knowledge series, <i>What Your Kindergartener Needs to Know: Preparing Your Child for a Lifetime of Learning</i>, which provides a comprehensive curriculum for the various subjects covered. When she inquired whether her child's teacher was familiar with the series and ascribed to its ideas, the teacher responded that no child could ever be expected to learn or understand a fraction of what was contained in the book. Not being pleased with the rather flippant answer, she discussed the teacher's remarks with a friend. The friend suggested she try home schooling. Parent A decided "she couldn't do much harm in trying to home school for one year" and once she started found she really enjoyed home schooling her son. She says "the experience of learning and being with my children" is the best part of home schooling. Her son is now 12 and she is home schooling her younger son who is 10 also</p>
Baker Family	<p>The family home schools mainly for religious reasons as they do not agree with some of the subjects and values that are taught in public schools. The mother stressed that with public school curricula "anything goes." Originally, the older daughter attended a private, religiously affiliated elementary school; however, the parents were not totally pleased with the school and decided to not enroll the daughter after 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The family is Baptist, and except for Catholic education, there were few options for private education in the area so the family turned to home schooling.</p>
Cook Family	<p>This is a military family who placed a great deal of thought into their decision to home school. The original destination for this father, or so they thought, was foreign mission work; however, military life became their mission. With two adopted children it was important for the parents to spend as much time as possible with them, so home schooling seemed to fit well with their lifestyle. The mother describes the "mission statement" for her home schooling as "teaching my children to love God, love to learn, and know how to learn." She concluded by saying that if her children could accomplish that, then she knew they would be successful.</p>

	<p>She sums up her reasons for home schooling by saying, “My husband and I did not just blindly leap into this decision but had much prayer and research involved.” She describes how they prayed for each child and the family as a whole in order to know if it would be beneficial for the family to have that particular child at home.</p> <p>Her daughter was home schooled in kindergarten and first grade, and third through ninth grades. At another duty station the family enrolled her in a Department of Defense school because she was extremely shy, and they believed she needed more time with her peers. Their son has always been home schooled beginning in kindergarten through the sixth grade.</p> <p>She emphasizes that home schooling allowed she and her husband to have a greater influence in their children’s lives by providing them with opportunities to share their faith with the children whenever opportunities arose. Home schooling also gave them the freedom to travel with the children allowing them to experience things on the family’s time and not being subject to a regimented school calendar.</p>
Dunn Family	<p>This family’s daughter did not meet the age requirement for kindergarten enrollment, and the private, religiously affiliated school in which they wanted to enroll their daughter adhered to the state’s age requirement. The family was frustrated by this situation especially since their pediatrician had indicated the child was ready to start school. A sister-in-law suggested the option of home schooling as she was home schooling her two children, so the mother began home schooling their kindergarten age daughter. At the same time she was also instructing their 4 year old.</p> <p>Although the age requirement for kindergarten was their primary reason to home school, the family also expressed a concern about the environment of public schools and the academics offered. Since they are desirous of enrolling their children in a church affiliated school, religion also played a part in their home schooling decision.</p>
Evans Family	<p>Safety of their child is the foremost reason this family chose to home school. Their older son was attending a private, Catholic school when he was threatened to be shot by another student. This incident occurred just after the Columbine shootings, and the parents were extremely concerned for the child’s safety. The mother describes the school administration’s attitude and response to the threat as very inadequate. The administration indicated that the child who threatened their son also “paid tuition” to attend the</p>



<p>Fisher Family</p>	<p>school, so the family saw the incident as basically being “swept under the rug” by the administration.</p> <p>At the time of this incident both parents were working; however, the magnitude of this threat and the safety of their child prompted the mother to quit her job to stay home and home school her son. She began home schooling her older son in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and he has just completed his 11<sup>th</sup> grade studies. She describes him as being very happy to be home schooled and he does not want to return to the private or public school environment. His plan is to possibly attend a culinary school after graduation.</p> <p>She is also home schooling her younger son who is 7 years old and just completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. He has never attended a public or private school and is doing school work at least one grade above his grade level. She also cites academics as a secondary reason for home schooling since she and her husband were disappointed in the caliber of education their older son was receiving in the private sector.</p> <p>This former instrumental music teacher has home schooled her four children from the time they were of school age. The children range in ages from 4 to 9 years old. The decision to home school arose from her teaching experience. As an instrumental music teacher she describes traveling from school to school and as she walked into the different schools she found herself thinking “this is no environment for children.” The walls were gray and dull, and the students were being herded through the halls like cattle. She said it just struck her, “Why would a child want to be in a place like this?”</p> <p>Additionally, she believes that at 5 years old children are “too young to start formal education” and being “out in the world on their own.” As she watched her twins growing up, who are 9 years old, she saw two very different children emerging. Even though they came from the same gene pool, she wondered how they would survive in a school classroom of 30 children, which was normal for the school district in which they resided at the time. This prompted her to consider home schooling.</p> <p>As time goes by she says she gathers more and more reasons for wanting to home school. She home schools for both religious and academic reasons. She wants her children to have a “firm grasp on the Bible and its teachings” and she can intersperse those teachings in her lessons which she says “will not happen in public school.” She is also concerned about different issues and topics that are discussed in schools and the way certain things are taught.</p>
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<p>Green Family</p>	<p>When she first decided to home school she wondered how she could accomplish it with working full time and expecting her 3<sup>rd</sup> child. This military family weighed the option of her continuing to teach and the cost of child care for three children as opposed to her becoming a stay-at-home mother and home schooling. At that time her husband was given orders for a new post, and the transfer and new job allowed this to happen.</p> <p>The mother believes home schooling keeps the children's education consistent so they are not continually enrolled and removed from schools as their father's assignment changes.</p> <p>This mother indicated religious/moral reasons as the main focus for home schooling; however, in talking with her, school environment is an issue as their children were involved in two different incidents in their public school. Their 7<sup>th</sup> grade child came home with satanic drawings he had completed at school. When questioned why he engaged in this activity, the child said a classmate coerced him into drawing the pictures in order to be part of his gang or the child would be "beaten up." The child does have a learning disability, dyslexia, and this sometimes impairs his understanding of a situation. The parents went to the school administration but were not pleased with the school's actions and ability to deal with the situation. In addition she believed the school had not provided her son with adequate instruction to meet his disability.</p> <p>At about the same time her older son was suffering from mononucleosis which caused him to miss several months of school. When he did return to school, he was still recovering from his illness, and during a test laid his head down on the desk and fell asleep. Thinking the student was being lazy and not wanting to finish the test, the teacher contacted the mother and called the student a "jughead" and "lazy." The parents decided to remove both children from the public school. Their main contention is that children should be treated with dignity and respect and not coerced into joining gangs under threat by another student or called names by their teachers.</p> <p>With 2 children being home schooled, the family believed it would be more advantageous to home school their other 2 children rather than having two sets of children with different workloads and schedules.</p>
<p>Hill Family</p>	<p>On the original questionnaire this mother indicated the family home schools for religious/moral reasons. However, when questioned further in the interview, the mother indicated that the</p>

	family is not pleased with the education and environment of their local public school.
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## Appendix D

### Describe your experiences as a home schooling family.

<i>Families</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Adams Family	<p>She describes her instructional program as structured emphasizing that the optimal time for instruction in their household is 8 AM to 12 noon. She emphasizes that as the main home schooling instructor it is essential that you have time and patience.</p> <p>She describes her biggest home schooling challenge as the tension that is often created between the parent and child when the child is having difficulty focusing on their work or when the child does not want to “get up in the morning” and begin instruction. As she indicates, “The parent is always the enforcer since the child is at home for their instruction daily.”</p>
Baker Family	<p>The home instruction is described as “less structured” but more open to opportunities that may occur in the family or in their particular studies. Much of the work is done during the mornings as the children tended to become tired and less focused by the afternoons.</p> <p>She stresses that sometimes it is challenging to motivate the children in a less structured environment, and she often feels that on occasions they listen better to other people. She attributes this to the fact that she is always the teacher. The children participate in their church sports activities. The younger child plays basketball and t-ball, and the older daughter plays basketball and volleyball.</p>
Cook Family	<p>A typical day is described as the children completing certain chores like making their beds, caring for pets, and getting ready for the day before instruction begins. Instruction begins at 8 AM and continues for 2 hours, at which time the children are given a half hour break. Studies continue until approximately 12:30 PM. After lunch they finish work that needs to be completed and by 3 PM they are usually finished. Just prior to bed the parents read to the children.</p> <p>Challenges to home schooling are twofold as described by the mother. The first is people outside the family not respecting your time and commitment; however, this mother says she is a person who has strong boundaries and this issue was minimal. The biggest challenge is keeping the children on course and focused. This is especially a problem when “spring fever” hits. So she compensates for that by working at a tougher pace prior to spring, so that when</p>

	<p>spring fever hits, the instruction can be adjusted to lighten the load. The instructional program is described as “structured, yet flexible” by the mother. She has a plan for each day and the amount of material that will be covered; however, each day depends upon what is happening and when the child gets up and is ready for instruction. For example her husband will be traveling out of the country this summer, so their summer work will focus on the different countries he will be visiting. This will include cooking projects, geography lessons, and learning about the different cultures. Otherwise, she follows the academy curriculum as it is “very extensive.” The family is taking a break for the summer from formal instruction, but the children will continue with reading and various projects so the children’s skills will not decline.</p>
Dunn Family	<p>This mother is a physical therapist and works 2 days per week so the children’s instruction mainly occurs on the days she is home. On the 2 days she works the children spend one day with the sister-in-law who is home schooling and they join in on those activities. On the other day they spend time with a friend who is a former music teacher, and she also engages them in different activities.</p>
	<p>Home schooling challenges are described by the mother as “keeping the child engaged and focused.” As she says, “there are times when the child is very focused, but there are times when she is not focused at all.” When this occurs, the mother simply readjusts her goals for the day so as not to frustrate the daughter or herself. She relies on her physical therapy training since this involves working with adults and facilitating their training. This educational experience is applied to her work with home schooling.</p>
Evans Family	<p>When she first began home schooling her older son, she describes their instructional program as structured; however, it has become a much more relaxed environment with the children taking breaks during the instructional time. The instruction is quite rigorous and the children spend much of their time working on projects and various lessons. One thing they enjoy about the flexibility of home schooling is if the children are experiencing “burn-out”, the family has the opportunity to take a “mental health” day which gives the children a break from studying.</p>
	<p>She describes the home schooling challenges as revolving around the public school calendar as the boys home school year round with a 2-3 week break in the summer.</p>
Fisher Family	<p>She describes their program as structured but with built in flexibility. Typically, they start each day with the Pledge of</p>

	<p>Allegiance, a prayer, and reading the Bible. The children are instructed in core courses but some days they take advantage of opportunities that arise to go someplace different.</p> <p>She talks about how the role of women has changed over the years, and this in itself is a big challenge. For example she says, “we are doing so much more as women than we have ever done before in history, so even without home schooling it is difficult.” She describes the difficulty of scheduling everything that has to be done – administering the household, cooking, cleaning, and now home schooling.</p> <p>“Being the only teaching voice is difficult because the children sometimes resist and don’t want to do anything I ask, but we get past it.” She jokingly says she does not get a vacation, so “perhaps, I should have my husband take leave and I get a vacation.”</p> <p>What she described as hard is “her husband is always leaving and coming back after spending various amounts of time at different military assignments.” This throws a “kink” in the children’s schedule. However, she says this is good because it allows her family to spend time with dad before leaving on assignment for a prolonged period of time. She sees other children on base who attend public school having to leave for school on their day their dad leaves on assignment, and this is hard for the children.</p>
Green Family	<p>Children are home schooled year round but instruction becomes less intense in the summer months; however, children continue with math and writing assignments. Incorporated into the summer months are trips to museums and historical places. The family has planned trips to the King Tut exhibit in Philadelphia, the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian, and trips to Williamsburg. The classroom time is developed around each child’s best time for instruction, regardless if it is morning or afternoon.</p>
Hill Family	<p>The home school program is described as being structured. Most of the instruction occurs during the morning although it can and does stretch into the early afternoon.</p> <p>The mother is the main instructor for the student, but the father also helps as he is able. The only challenge the mother foresees with home schooling is “the opportunity to have time to myself as home schooling is a very time consuming undertaking.”</p>

## Appendix E

**Table 8: What types of resources do you use when home schooling?**

<i>Families</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Adams Family	<p>The mother uses the Alpha Omega curriculum. Instruction occurs each weekday and the children usually engage in math and language arts instruction at the beginning of the day followed by social studies and science. She found classes like language arts and social studies were easier to teach, but instruction in art and foreign language much more difficult.</p> <p>To supplement her instructional program she does computer research to locate interesting lessons or find help in areas she is not as proficient. The family uses the library extensively and she maintains a reading list for each child. The children have access to a computer and laptop and use technology for research or emailing. She does not use any computer assisted instruction.</p> <p>She stresses that her two children have 2 totally different personalities. The older child loves to read and probably reads at least 10 books per month. He also participates in outside activities like sports and scouting. Due to his “voracious” appetite for reading, according to the mother, the family uses the library extensively. Her son, however, has amassed a large collection of chapter books and novels, and they have discussed the idea of creating a reading club for younger children, especially boys, who may not find reading as enjoyable. This would provide her son with an opportunity to share his love of reading, help children choose interesting books, and have book discussions to help engage young readers with the story.</p> <p>She describes her younger son as “fun loving.” He also participates in different outside activities as karate, sports, and scouting. She definitely disagrees with the widely held notion by many home schooling opponents that home schooled students are “not well socialized.” She emphasizes that her children have friends, participate in different activities, play sports, enjoy scouting, and take private music and art lessons.</p>
Baker Family	<p>This mother has been using the A Beka curriculum as this is what was most familiar to her since she was educated in a private, religious school utilizing this curriculum. A Beka did offer a DVD program that was similar to a virtual classroom in that it was a classroom with a teacher instructing a group of students. She thought this would be interesting and engaging for her younger</p>

	<p>child, but the child was bored with the presentation. This coming year she has decided to experiment with other programs for her younger child and do more project based instruction rather than textbook based.</p> <p>They do not use any computer assisted instruction, and the children use the computer to play educational games. Computer use will increase she indicated as the child ages. The family uses the library extensively, especially since it is so close to their home.</p> <p>The family purchases curricular materials like Saxon math, Sonlight, Alpha and Omega, and Apologia Science. They use the library extensively especially for books required by the Sonlight program. The internet is used for research.</p> <p>Home schooling has allowed her the opportunity to “teach life skills” which she stresses is “just as important as traditional education.” “I genuinely enjoy being with my children, and I love being the one to see their “aha” moment when they understand something.” She continues by saying, “When children are raised in corporate learning environments typically they are always with their peers. This does not give them much time to learn compassion, understanding, and communication with people of all generations.”</p>
Cook Family	<p>The curriculum the mother uses is through the Faith Christian Academy, which is not recognized by the state as a church umbrella group for home schooling so she had to be monitored by the public school system. This academy, as she describes the program, offers a myriad of support to the home schooling family. Each year the academy sends a representative to the area to test the children in order to develop an “individualized curriculum” for each student. The academy also sponsors parent training sessions.</p> <p>The daughter does use the computer for instruction with a program that the mother describes as “ear-aerobics” and Reader Rabbit. The “ear-aerobics” program is a combination of phonics, sounds with pictures, memory patterns, and listening skills. As the child’s proficiency increases the program becomes more difficult. The family is pleased with their daughter’s progress since the testing in the past 2 years indicates that the daughter is performing well above grade level.</p> <p>Critical thinking is a large component in the curriculum the mother is using with her kindergartener. She checks with teachers in their church school to make sure she is on the right track with her</p>
	Dunn Family



<p>Evans Family</p>	<p>instructional program. One thing the child is working on is simple analogies, and when asked about this type of content, the teacher indicated that this was removed from the curriculum since it is no longer part of the SAT exams.</p> <p>The mother uses the Bridgeway Academy program as it offers a diploma and graduation. They utilize public library resources extensively as each child does an extensive amount of reading and writing. Both children have their own computers for use in their studying and research projects. Each year the children take the TERA NOVA standardized test through the Bridgeway Academy and both score in the 80<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles.</p> <p>The children take outside music lessons. The older child takes guitar lessons and is very interested in music and the younger child takes piano lessons. The younger child is also interested in golf and likes to read Sherlock Holmes in order to “unravel the puzzle” in the story. The children socialize with children from their neighborhood and church.</p>
<p>Fisher Family</p>	<p>The curriculum comes from Amblesideonline which is based on Charlotte Mason’s philosophy. It is strongly literature based with book lists for literature, science, and history. The program offers a lot of advice and has email lists to join for additional information. It does not have a math component so she goes on line for additional resources to teach math.</p> <p>The children use technology; however, she is careful what sites they go on to do research. She does use a computer instructed spelling program. They constantly use the library and some of their textbooks are actually library books.</p> <p>Two of the children participate in a baseball league, and in the fall all four children will participate in a soccer league. The children have participated in gymnastics classes and piano lessons. She is now starting to teach her children piano and strings instruction from her will follow. Her husband’s involvement in the children’s instruction is sporadic. He does “take advantage of teachable moments at home when he will sit down with the children and explain some electronic gadget or he will show the boys how to do yard work.”</p>
<p>Green Family</p>	<p>The mother has degrees in art history and English and the father has a medical and business degree which the family believes is adequate to home school. Presently, 4 children are being home schooled ages 9, 12, 14, and 17.</p>

<p>Hill Family</p>	<p>Typically, the family spends about \$3,000 per year on curricular materials for the children. The mother develops book lists for each child and this generates their spelling and vocabulary skills, writing assignments, and comprehension skills. Each child reads 2 to 3 books per month. They use Saxon math and Life Pack science materials. As the father is a medical doctor he often utilizes his work in the hospital to enhance science instruction. The children are very computer literate using the computer to do project presentations. They do use the library, but not extensively as most of the children's books are purchased.</p> <p>The older son has already received an early acceptance to Loyola College, Chicago, for a special program. His instruction this year will focus on test preparation and obtaining his GED. She described the college admissions process as "fairly straightforward in the information they needed and the tests to be taken" especially since he has no transcripts from a public or private school.</p> <p>The mother has used different curricular materials including PACE, A Beka, and Elementary Success. This material is supplemented with different purchased materials. The mother also uses the internet extensively to research and obtain various lesson plans for different subjects and for additional educational materials. She indicates that "she has found a wealth of free curricular materials on-line for home schooling parents."</p> <p>Her daughter also uses the internet extensively for research as well as educational games like Funbrain.com. This particular program has the student master each level before they can move onto the next more difficult level. The child also enjoys the Elementary Success program as it is a computer program that offers the student many different and challenging options as they progress through their studies.</p> <p>Outside of the home the daughter dances competitively with a local dance school performing both in a team and solo. These dance competitions do require the family to travel to competitions in the surrounding area.</p>
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## Appendix F

### How long do you think that you will continue to home school your child(ren)?

<i>Families</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Adams Family	While she stresses that the home schooling experience has been enjoyable, she has realized that her sons have come to depend heavily upon her for different things. At this point in their education, she believes it important for them to have a school experience. Both boys will be attending a private, Catholic school, although her older son would like to continue home schooling.
Baker Family	This parent home schooled her older daughter from 5 <sup>th</sup> through 8 <sup>th</sup> grades, and the daughter has just completed her first year in public high school. This is the first time the family has sent a child to public school, and they would have preferred to send the daughter to a private, secondary high school, but there are few affordable options in the area. Currently, she is home schooling her 6-year old.
Cook Family	Her daughter has been home schooled in kindergarten and first grade, and third through ninth grades. At another duty station the family enrolled her in a Department of Defense school because she was extremely shy, and they believed she needed more time with her peers. Their son has always been home schooled beginning in kindergarten through the sixth grade.
Dunn Family	This family indicated they will probably home school their daughter until at least the second grade as there is no age requirement for enrollment in this grade. The younger son may or may not be home schooled when he is ready for school
Evans Family	This family indicated they will continue home schooling their children.
Fisher Family	She said she and her husband have talked about enrolling their two older children in public school because of the stress factor placed on her. However, with some scheduling adjustments to accommodate her needs, the family has decided to continue to home school. She stresses that the children have not asked to be enrolled in school. They like home schooling. The two older children participated in the Maryland School Assessments, but did not like it. They were concerned that they spent the day testing and this left them no time to do anything else especially since school ended at 3:30 PM.

Green Family	This is a military family who will continue home schooling their children in this area. When the father is transferred, they will probably send the two younger children to private school and continue home schooling the two older children until they complete high school. Her oldest child will be a senior this year.
Hill Family	When asked how long the family will home school, the mother indicates that she may not continue to home school in the near future and would be amendable to placing the child in a private school or a more acceptable public school other than their neighborhood school. The daughter, however, really enjoys home schooling and wants to continue for as long as she is able.

## Appendix G

**Home schooling families have the option of having their program monitored by the public schools or by a church organization. Why did you decide to use the public school rather than a church organization?**

<i>Families</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Adams Family	<p>When asked if she is a member of any home school organization, she comments that she briefly participated in a local Catholic home schooling group but found that the mothers in the group mainly “sat around and talked.” She has chosen not to participate with other such groups because the time spent traveling to and from meetings was taking away from her instructional time with the children, and that such organizations have not proven to be useful curricular resources for her family. She also believes that each home schooling family has a different approach to home schooling, so her style does not necessarily coincide with others in the various home schooling groups. She does remain in contact with friends in this particular church home school group since her boys socialize with other children from the church.</p>
Baker Family	<p>When she began home schooling, she was not totally aware of the different church umbrella groups and chose to be monitored by the local public school system. After she had home schooled for approximately a year, she was introduced to a church umbrella group and changed her monitoring to this group. One thing she liked about the church umbrella group was the opportunity for students to participate in field trips. She attempted to take advantage of this for her older daughter, but with younger children it became difficult for her to accompany her daughter and often the trips were very age specific and not appropriate for her younger children. After spending two years with this group and finding it too restrictive in regard to the large quantity of curricular material the group wanted to review, she returned to being monitored by the public school system.</p> <p>She does not belong to a home schooling group, but has friends who home school. They get together to share and discuss their home schooling instructional programs.</p>
Cook Family	<p>We chose the county for validation.</p>
Dunn Family	<p>She home schools with a group that is located in another state and not recognized by the State of Maryland; therefore, she had to choose to be monitored by the public school system.</p>

Evans Family	<p>When considering to home school, the family investigated different avenues available to them. One church umbrella group indicated that their members should not talk with government officials or allow their children to speak with such individuals. The group also did not want a family to allow any outside agencies to examine the school work done by home schooling students. She did join a home schooling group for Catholic families; however, she found the group “too strict” for her family, and has home schooled with the public school for the last 4 years. She states that the “public school system is easy to work with and the children are encouraged to show their hard work and accomplishments at the portfolio reviews.”</p>
Fisher Family	<p>As a military family there are pros and cons to home schooling as they move from base to base. She has home schooled mainly in Kentucky and somewhat in Tennessee. She finds Maryland home school regulations more restrictive than Kentucky as no one reviewed the children’s work there and the state only interfered if there was a complaint lodged against the family.</p> <p>She belongs to the military base co-op for home schooling parents in which parents get together and engage the children in different activities. She also belongs to Christian home school group which provides guidelines for evaluating student work and connects the family with trusted people in the group to review and guide student work.</p>
Green Family	<p>The family does not belong to any home schooling group. The mother is acquainted with friends in different groups but does not think “they serve a purpose as she does not always see the relevance in some of the things the groups do.” She likes developing her own instructional materials.</p> <p>The mother chose to be monitored by the public school because people often “question the concept of and rigor of home schooling.” Being monitored by the public school system is a way of validating her children’s home schooling education as they must meet certain requirements to continue home schooling. She finds that by telling people she home schools with the local public school system, “it quells people’s negative comments.”</p>
Hill Family	<p>The child is 9 years old and started home schooling in preschool when her mother helped in a church school program. This church program had individuals who reviewed students’ work as well as the curriculum utilized by the family. After one year, the family stopped participating because the mother was not pleased with the</p>

	<p>approach or the competence of the individuals reviewing student work. Although she had friends in other church groups, the protocol in those groups continued to be families checking other students' work.</p> <p>Presently, the family does not belong to any home schooling group. The mother says she "does take advantage of talking with other home schooling families she knows." This gives her an additional resource that allows her to talk to other home schooling parents about their experiences and to share ideas about instruction.</p> <p>Being concerned about the appropriateness of the church organization review, she chose to be monitored by the public school system. This also gave her the opportunity to work one-on-one with her daughter rather than with a group. Like other interviewees, she again reiterated that she chose the county to monitor her program because she "liked" the idea that the county reviews the student's portfolio and that the student's portfolio is required to meet certain criteria in order for it to be acceptable to the reviewer. The review by the public school system's office of home schooling provides validation for the family that they are meeting specific criteria when questioned by other people.</p>
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## Appendix H

**If offered, would you utilize any additional services provided by the public school system as part of your home schooling activities?**

<i>Families</i>	Responses
Adams Family	When asked if she would support the public schools offering home schooled students opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities or attend certain classes, she immediately said she would support and take advantage of such opportunities. She specifically mentioned classes in art and foreign language which she had previously identified as more difficult to teach. She suggested that local public schools could “open their doors” to home schoolers and invite them to attend various school activities or possibly participate in field trips.
Baker Family	She readily agreed when asked if public schools should offer home schoolers opportunities to enroll in classes or extracurricular activities. In her experience being monitored by the county, she described the director as “picking up” on which families are really home schooling and doing a good job and which families are marginal.”
Cook Family	When asked if she thought the public school system could offer home schoolers access to classes or extracurricular activities, she replied, “Absolutely.” She indicated that almost every home schooling family “feels a bit inadequate in some areas.” Her inadequate area was science, but the Apologia curriculum was designed for a parent to monitor and not teach, so that was a welcome curricular addition. She suggested that partnering with the public schools would be helpful for home schoolers since “we live in a society where we need to work as a team.”
Dunn Family	<p>She was very much in favor of the public school system offering various opportunities to home schooling students. This is especially important to her if she chooses to place her child in public school. Since the child is testing well beyond her age, the mother would like to make sure that the child is placed according to her ability and not her age so she would not be bored with having material continually repeated again and again.</p> <p>Extracurricular activities would also help families as they struggle with giving children real world experiences. Even though the family has involved the children in t-ball, church choir, and dance lessons, she believes public school offerings in this area like drama, team oriented activities, and sports especially in secondary grades are</p>



Evans Family	<p>important opportunities for home schoolers. “Such opportunities, she says, “would help both the child and the parent who has to orchestrate and search out all the activities and programs.”</p> <p>Having the public schools offer home schoolers the opportunity to participate in classes or extracurricular activities is seen as a “good option” that could be offered to home schooling students. She especially sees “the advantages” that home schooling families could derive by taking classes they “do not feel totally qualified to teach such as foreign language.” She further states that “as taxpayers, home schooling families support their local public schools” and having public schools offer opportunities to home schoolers would be a good return on their taxes.</p>
Fisher Family	<p>She would definitely take advantage of any public school offerings especially for her two older children. “This would be most beneficial.” She described her niece’s experience in Missouri as a home schooler as being able to take computer classes at the local public school. However, she was not sure how such an option would affect the teachers and the schools.</p>
Green Family	<p>This was the only family who adamantly said they would not participate in any public school offerings.</p>
Hill Family	<p>Asked if she would avail herself of classes or extracurricular activities offered by her local public school system, she said she would “definitely take advantage of such opportunities.”</p>

## Appendix I

### What do you think the role of government should be in educating children?

<i>Families</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Adams Family	<p>As for the role of government in education, she emphatically states that “education is a parental responsibility” and that “too often parents delegate the education of their child to the schools.” Thus, schools become the “fall guy” for what she views as a parent’s responsibility as society blames the schools for creating the achievement gap.</p> <p>Accountability is important to her and she believes parents and children need to be held accountable for their actions. She stresses to her children the importance of an education and obtaining good grades as this becomes part of your educational resume. Students need to take on the responsibility of obtaining a good education as they train for a good job later in life.</p>
Baker Family	<p>As far as government involvement in education, she believes it is good the government gets involved because “there are many parents who are not overly involved or take an active part in their children’s education.” She does place a caveat on this explaining that “sometimes the government guidelines go too far in mandating different things, like teaching tolerance and sex education.” It is her belief that these particular subjects should be “taught by parents and churches” and “not by a teacher the family or child does not really know as these individuals may not hold the same beliefs the family does both religiously and morally.” Again, she reiterated that there should be educational guidelines in place, but “parents should retain the right to decide what is best for their child.”</p>
Cook Family	<p>“Corporate education,” as she categorizes public education, “is important.” Since we do pay school taxes, we should be entitled to some (educational) benefits. She would also encourage the government to fund curriculum for home schooling families as “it doesn’t cost nearly as much to support a home schooler’s curriculum as it does to have that same child in public school.” She would like to see public schools open their doors to home schoolers by allowing them to participate in extracurricular activities which would help to enhance the home schooling experience.</p>
Dunn Family	<p>She says she hears very scary things about what comes out of the schools and what students are exposed to as safety and moral issues. These were the reasons she was drawn to private education especially a private school associated with her church. She also says</p>

<p>Evans Family</p>	<p>that standardized testing required by the government takes away from the curriculum as students are training to take a test.</p> <p>In regard to the government’s role in education, the mother describes the government as “being too lenient in the way schools are administered.” By this she means that administrators are “attempting to not upset different groups of parents and students in the school community by not enforcing or emphasizing stricter regulations and guidelines for the students.” For example she suggests that in the last 20 years students have not participated in the Pledge of Allegiance or school prayer. In part she attributes this lenient attitude with the rise of violence in the schools especially students bringing guns to school and shooting fellow classmates and teachers. She also believes that “in some respects society is having a meltdown” as there are more teen pregnancies, parents not actually parenting their children by guiding them and giving them appropriate social experiences, schools being too lenient in not enforcing dress codes, and students becoming very disrespectful to their parents, teachers, and people in general.” This is not only a problem in public school, but she has witnessed student disrespect in the private school her son attended.</p> <p>She and her husband are very involved with their children and who they associate with as they do not want their children associating with children taking or dealing drugs or alcohol and children who bully others. They are instilling in their children that “life owes you nothing” and you “have to work for what you want in life.”</p>
<p>Fisher Family</p>	<p>The role of government in education she finds is a tough question and one that concerns her. She realizes that the government became involved with education because it was believed that parents were not doing a good job educating their children. This started with the “Old Satan Deluder Law.” She says it is difficult to find a balance of authority. “I don’t want to send my children to school because I think I can do it better than the state can and yet the state has to have some sort of way to know that everyone is being educated.” She believes the government sometimes is “too picky” with home schoolers by “regulating the number of school days for instruction, the subjects parents should teach and the hours of instruction.” She agrees with compulsory attendance laws but thinks there should be “some leeway for parents.” She says, “for example if a child’s pet dies, the parent should be able to keep the child home without penalty.” However, she says, “In regard to home schooling, I think the government should keep hands off. They should step in only if they see a situation in which the parent is not educating the child.”</p>

Green Family	<p>This mother believes that government regulation often places too many pressures on classroom teachers who have a difficult time dealing with many student needs in large classroom settings. Again, she stresses that “the problem in many instances is not with the school’s curriculum and/or teachers, but that children are often left on their own by parents. They come to school with little structure in their lives.” She does suggest that the government could aid families by financially helping them to afford appropriate before and after school care. Even though she realizes that some schools do offer mentoring programs for children, she does not believe these mentoring programs are reaching the children that need the most help.</p> <p>As did many of the other interviewees she stressed that the main problem in schools today is parents. She stressed, “Many parents often do not take the responsibility necessary to guide their children in positive directions. In some instances families may have 2 people in the workforce in order to make ends meet or children come from single family homes. Children need parental guidance which cannot be regulated by the government.”</p>
Hill Family	<p>Her belief about government involvement in education mirrors her reason for being monitored by the public school system. She said, “I like the idea that the state sets educational standards for home schooling families to meet. This holds home schooling families accountable for their educational programs.”</p>

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