

HOMESCHOOLING - IS IT FOR ME??

With all the educational options available today, it is well worth your time as parents to carefully assess what you want your children taught, how you want your children taught and who you want to teach them. Home education offers a unique opportunity in that you, as parents, are solely responsible for the education of your children. However, choosing to home educate is not something that should be taken lightly. Much prayer, thought and discussion should take place. The consequences of entering into home education unprepared can have a serious impact on you as parents, your children, and on home education as a whole. We would like you to have a successful experience if you decide that home education is the right choice for you.

The following self-evaluation is offered by MACHE (Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators) to assist you as you consider home education. This is not a professional assessment, but is one of several tools to help you as parents evaluate and decide whether home education is for you and your family. We suggest both you and your spouse work through the evaluation separately and then discuss your answers together.

Write your answers to the following questions:

- Ø *Why are you considering home education for your children?*
- Ø *How would you define home education?*
- Ø *Have you considered and are you willing to make the changes home education will bring to your family?*
- Ø *What do you know about the history of home education in Minnesota?*

Once you and your spouse have answered these questions, set aside some time to discuss them together. Read through our responses to the questions on the following pages. This will give you a good start to determining if home education is for you and, if so, directing you as you “catch your vision” for your family.

Why are you considering home education for your children?

Your reasons for considering home education can be numerous:

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

If you do not have a solid answer to the question of why you are considering home education, this would be a good opportunity for you as parents to spend some time thinking about why you are looking into home education.

God commands us to be responsible for our children (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). Although home education can easily be seen merely as an alternative when a child is having difficulties in a public or private school setting, this alone should not be the basis of your reasoning. Our experience indicates that successful home educators must possess a fervent desire to teach their children themselves.

We encourage you to spend time in prayer as you weigh your reasons for home educating. Discuss them together with your spouse. Observe other home educating families and, if you feel comfortable, ask to meet with them and find out how they made the decision to home educate.

How would you define home education?

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

MACHE believes the traditional family is the foundation of society and that parents have the God-given responsibility to determine the proper education for their children. Home education takes place when children are primarily taught and evaluated under the authority of their own parents in their own home. We believe that parents, not government,

should determine the curriculum and standards for their own children. MACHE believes that home education fulfills its highest calling when parents educate their own children according to Christ-centered, Biblical principles.

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

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

Home education will have a positive impact on your home life (whether you are starting from the very beginning of your child’s school years or whether you are taking a child out of public/private school) if you do some preparation beforehand. Please understand that we are not saying it will be easy! There will be adjustments in your family’s routine, and these adjustments can be challenging at times. Those beginning to home educate right at the start may find the transition easier than those families who have to adjust from the routines of public/private school to home education. Be prepared to spend the majority of your day with your children – this will require you and your spouse to be spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally ready. Everyone is in the trenches on the bad days and everyone rejoices on the good days . . . together! You will teach your children yourself, using curriculum of your choice.

As you consider the effect home education will have on your family, we encourage you to also consider the value of a relationship with Jesus Christ. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)*

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

Understanding the history of the home education movement in Minnesota will help you develop your definition of home education and your personal understanding of why you are considering home education. It is our hope that by familiarizing yourself with the home education movement, you will catch a vision for home educating your own children, and also be encouraged to continue the work of carefully guarding the freedom to home educate.

The history of the home education movement in Minnesota is a fascinating story. Because of that history, we have the freedom to home educate in Minnesota – a freedom not to be taken lightly. Each one of us who chooses to home educate our children has a role to play in safeguarding the freedoms for which those who have gone before us fought so hard to secure.

In the 1980s and 1990s, parents who home educated their children were challenged by the public school districts, social workers and neighbors. They were charged with truancy, and threatened with prosecution for child neglect, merely because they were doing what they thought God called them to do. Some families had to hide inside their homes with drapes fully drawn to elude the attention of curious neighbors and intrusive social workers. The right of Minnesota parents to home educate their children has been guaranteed by law since 1987. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. Some public school districts take an adversarial role toward home educators. Other districts offer services to home educators which may draw them back into the governmental system, providing more state per pupil dollars for the local district budget. Each year, legislation is closely monitored to safeguard against legislation by elected officials who are very interested in imposing burdensome regulations upon home educators which could effectively reduce or eliminate the home education freedoms that parents have worked so hard to secure.

The freedoms that we now enjoy will only remain intact if we who are involved in the movement do our part to keep them that way through praying for our leaders, keeping abreast of issues on the home education front, and making calls to legislators if necessary.

Closing Thoughts . . .

We encourage you to do your homework and read several of the selections in the accompanying bibliography. We also encourage you to talk to local “support group” leaders to get a solid perspective about home education. Find out about

the history of the movement, and all of the sacrifices that veteran home educators have made so that home education could be legal in Minnesota. ***If parents begin without this knowledge, they risk making serious mistakes with the public school district or the state government which will not only make their schooling more cumbersome, but could actually set legal precedent and reduce the current freedoms of Minnesota home educators.*** Please, ask veteran home educators about their journey. They will normally be very willing to help you, and “show you the ropes.” If needed, contact MACHE by phone at 763-717-9070 or 1-866-717-9070 (Greater Minnesota) or e-mail the MACHE office at mache@isd.net. We will put you in touch with a support group leader in your area.

For the Christian parent, home education should only begin after serious prayer. A successful parent-educator will be convicted by God to home educate, according to verses such as Deuteronomy 6:7, “*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*” This command is not to be taken lightly. Home education should not necessarily be utilized as a means to escape FROM the governmental/group school system. We believe it is a movement of God, and that He will adequately equip those who respond to His admonition TO instruct their children at home.

Selected Readings for Prospective Home Educators

(This is not an exhaustive list.)

The Basic Steps to Successful Homeschooling by Vicki A. Brady

Christian Home Educators’ Curriculum Manual (Elementary Grades) by Cathy Duffy

Christian Home Educators’ Curriculum Manual (Junior/Senior High) by Cathy Duffy

The Christian Home School, Revised and Updated by Gregg Harris

Home Grown Kids: A Practical Handbook for Teaching Your Children by Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore

The Home School Manual for Parents Who Teach Their Own Children by Theodore E. Wade, Jr.

The How and Why of Home Schooling by Ray E. Ballmann

How to Home School by Gayle Graham

Home Schooling: The Right Choice! (formerly entitled, The Right Choice: The Incredible Failure of Public Education and the Rising Hope of Home Schooling (an academic, historical, practical and legal perspective)) by Christopher J. Klicka

The Whole Hearted Child: A Handbook for Christian Home Education by Clay and Sally Clarkson

When You Rise Up: A Covenantal Approach to Homeschooling by R. C. Sproul, Jr.

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