

Home Education... Yes

Ruth Nobel

I believe that among Reformed Christians it has been a commonly accepted principle that the education of a child is the responsibility of parents (cf. Deut. 6:5-7, Baptism Form, q. and a. 3). Therefore, it would seem a natural, correct, and logical approach for parents *first* to prayerfully consider home education, *before* the other options which are available. Instead, I feel that many parents give it little thought but simply fall into the accepted pattern of largely delegating this responsibility. Among those who do consider it, there is often instant rejection based on a feeling of inadequacy. I would like briefly to attempt to dispel these fears, so that parents can make a more informed decision on how best to fulfill their baptismal vows.

Home education has many obvious advantages. There is a low pupil-teacher ratio, which allows for individual attention, a feat difficult to attain in a classroom setting. The child can be allowed to proceed at his own rate, which has been held up as the ideal situation. There is no time wasted in travel, nor money wasted on "trendy" clothes. Parents have a superior knowledge of the child, a great asset in

teaching. Parents can instill their own Christian philosophy of life, without excessive peer pressure. Students in TV-less homes need not feel odd, nor do they need to lose sleep over being in or out of a clique. Family togetherness is encouraged in a day when it is under attack from every side.

Many have proposed several disadvantages of home education: lack of socialization, no gym or laboratories, lack of teacher certification, and inadequate preparation for college. We should remember that not all socialization has positive value. Sad to say, fellow students may be disrespectful to teachers, habitually unkind to peers, excessively materialistic, or fanatically sports/TV crazy, to mention only a few undesirable and readily transferrable traits. Many parents would like to be more selective in choosing their children's companions. Home educators recognize the need for friends and supply opportunity: church-related activities, family gatherings, having friends overnight, having family-with-family visits, instead of just adults-with-adults. Also the quantity of socialization (the *constant* presence of *many* others) can be a hindrance to gaining an academic education.

Children are able to maintain physical fitness without a gymnasium. Biking, swimming, tennis, volleyball, ice skating — a long list of healthful activities are available either at home or in the park. We should keep physical education in proper perspective — the goal of a healthy mind in a healthy body does not demand maximum proficiency in all sports and certainly not the hero-worship which often accompanies sports in a school setting.

Science laboratories below college level have two primary functions: they add interest and reinforcement to the textbook, and teach basic manipulation of equipment. Many experiments *can* be conducted at home. Skills not learned at home can be picked up in a person's first college science class.

Just as having a teaching certificate does not endow one with the ability to teach, similarly, *not* having the certificate does not make one *unqualified* to teach. The same God Who gives us our calling is willing and able to give the abilities to fulfill it. Parents have a devotion to their children above what they can expect anyone else to have. This is a basic ingredient for a good teacher. Concerning subject material, they have previously learned it themselves, and will be able to recall and teach it with the excellent texts, teachers' keys,

and manuals available. A college education is not only unnecessary, but may even be a disadvantage, when one considers how John Dewey's humanistic philosophy has permeated most education courses.

Many are concerned that a home education will hamper the student who wishes to continue his education. We should consider results. I am acquainted with children in home schools who score several grades above their age level on Iowa Basic Tests. Others have scored high on the ACT and SAT, and, accustomed to independent study, are doing well as college freshmen. There is presently a home-educated National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalist, waiting to hear of Finalist standing. Of course, there are also the less studious "home-schoolers," who plod along, learning the necessities and little more. But hopefully they, as their counterparts in the Christian school, will be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

There is one more consideration — what about the state requirements? May we educate our children at home if the state says no? This topic could occupy many pages of discussion. I would like to point out only that in Scripture education is described as a parental responsibility, not a government function. If we then

go to the State to ask permission to instruct our children, after God has commanded us to, are we not elevating government above God? When a conflict arises, I believe our position must be that we obey God rather than men.

As with any human endeavor, home education has its problems: teaching mothers become weary, their children become bored, etc. However, I hope this article has

shown that home education solves a lot of problems faced by the conventional school and provides a workable alternative to it. The parents may be assured that, though their teaching is done in human frailty, with God's blessing, they may hear "well done, good and faithful servant. . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



CURRENT ISSUES

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One-Room Schools Make a Comeback

In a nation that lives by the motto, "Bigger is better," it is refreshing to see that the value of something small has been recognized by experts. During the '60's and '70's one-room schools were being quickly eliminated. Students were bused to central schools which were equipped with the latest educational tools.

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Although no society for education in Protestant Reformed circles operates a one-room school, there are several societies which operate multi-grade classroom schools. Since multi-grade classroom schools are closely related to one-room schools, what is said about one can apply to the other.

The December 2, 1985 issue of *Time* points out that parents and education officials have been working to save one-room schools, since their value is being acknowl-