

Gov't Survey Reveals Homeschooling Growth

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And over the last 8 years (1999-2007) since the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) was first conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's NCES, homeschooling has witnessed a 77 percent growth.

"Homeschoolers can now be found in all walks of life," commented Michael Smith, president of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), which advocates homeschooling.

Data for the most recent NHES was collected for students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade. Interviews were conducted with the parents of 10,681 students, including 290 homeschooled students. For the survey, students were considered to be homeschooled if their parents reported them as being schooled at home instead of at a public or private school for at least part of their education and if their part-time enrollment in public or private school did not exceed 25 hours a week.

According to data from the 2007 NHES survey, an estimated 1.5 million students (1,508,000) were homeschooled in the United States in the spring of 2007, making up 2.9 percent of the school-age population in America. In the spring of 2003, the survey reported that an estimated 1.1 million students were being homeschooled, or 2.2 percent of the school-age population. Data from the first NHES, in 1999, showed an estimated 850,000 homeschooled students in the United States — about 1.7 percent of the school-age population.

"Homeschooling is a mainstream educational alternative. It will continue to flourish as parents and children continue to experience the social and academic benefits of a home based education," said HSLDA's Smith.

Aside from simply estimating the number of homeschooled children in the United States, the 2003 and 2007 NHES went one step further and asked parents whether particular reasons for homeschooling their children applied to them. The three reasons selected by parents of more than two-thirds of students were: concern about the school environment, to provide religious or moral instruction, and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools.

In the 2007 NHES, parents also were asked which one of their selected reasons for homeschooling was the most important. The reason reported by the highest percentage of homeschoolers' parents as being most important was to provide religious or moral instruction (36 percent). For an additional 21 percent, the most important reason was concern about the school environment, and for 17 percent it was dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools.

The remaining homeschoolers had parents who reported another reason as being most important, including the physical or mental health problems of their child (2 percent); the special needs of their child (4 percent); interest in a nontraditional approach to education (7 percent); and other reasons such as family time, finances, travel, and distance (14 percent).

Estimates of homeschooling in 2007 were based on data from the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI) of the 2007 NHES.

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