

## SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF HOME SCHOOLS AND PARENTS WHO OPERATE THEM

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**Problem.** The home-school movement in America presents a rapidly emerging alternative to conventional educational systems. The purpose of this study was to identify selected characteristics of home schools and of the parents who operate them.

**Procedure.** The population used in this descriptive research was drawn from the files of the Hewitt Research Foundation, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Potential respondents were parents indicating recent experience or interest in home-school operations.

The study was designed to develop a profile of home schools and home-school operators by identifying central tendencies in the respondent data. A mailed questionnaire asked the parents questions in five areas: (1) reasons for operating home school; (2) the general nature of home schools; (3) essential elements for home-school success; (4) psychographic characteristics of home-school operators; and (5) demographic characteristics of home-school operators.

**Findings.** Data analysis produced the following findings:

1. The major reasons expressed by parents for operating home schools (in order of importance) were as follows: (a) interest in the moral health and character development of their children; (b) concern over the detrimental effect of rivalry and ridicule in conventional schools; (c) parent-perceived poor quality of public-school education; and (d) the desire to extend parent-child contact.

2. The general nature of home schools, as revealed by the responses, embraces the following typical home-school characteristics: (a) a small, family enterprise, averaging two children and sponsored by both parents; and (b) an informal, child-centered, relatively flexible program.

3. Parent-perceived success factors (in order of importance) were as follows: (a) love of children; (b) strong parental determination; (c) family unity in the enterprise; (d) support from friends and others; and (e) economic ability to afford the additional expenses.

4. The psychographic profile indicated that parents were, for the most part, conservatives politically and regular in church attendance. Home-school operators expressed concern over violence in public schools, and

over excess government control. They reported themselves as occasional travelers and as moderately active in community affairs.

5. The demographic profile indicated the following: For the most part, home-school operators (a) lived in small or rural areas; (b) came from religious backgrounds that were diverse and non-traditional; and (c) tended to have small families. Generally, operators were homemaking mothers whose spouses were professionals or skilled workers, with a household income ranging between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year. The parents typically had attended between one and three years of college.

**Conclusions.** These parent profiles identify a segment of the American population that is likely to initiate and operate home schools. They tend to be individualistic, law-abiding, concerned about their parent role, dissatisfied with available options in contemporary education, and actively engaged in implementing their own solution. They desire to reestablish the home as the basic unit in a free-enterprise society and are willing to confront social opposition in order to meet their personal goals. Boards of Education could well restudy the home school as a valid option in education.