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THE CYCLE OF TRANSFORMATION IN HOME SCHOOL FAMILIES OVER TIME

DISSERTATION

Presented in partial fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
1999

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College of Education
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine from an insider's perspective the goals, motivations, and curricular implementation of home school families. This 23 month naturalistic, multi-site study was conducted with 17 families in central Ohio. Data collected included interviews, case studies, participant observation, and document analysis. All participants had been home schooling for a minimum of three years.

Three major themes emerged from an interpretative analysis of the data (Erickson, 1986) as primary to the underlying structure of home school families: family relationships, curriculum implementation, and the parental role. The transformation over time of each of these themes was traced and documented.

Initially there was often an adjustment period with family relationships as families got used to being families and schools. The second year parents reported operating as a cooperative unit and participating in many extracurricular activities together. By the third year families were active in their communities by participating in meaningful ways including volunteering, apprenticeships, and work. After year three families had adapted to this new living and learning life style and no longer had thoughts of sending their children back to school.
Curricular implementation changed dramatically as parents became accustomed to teaching. Parents adapted curriculum to meet academic needs and weaknesses the second year. Year three parents chose curriculum based on their childrens’ strengths and interests.

The parental role also changed over time. Year one parents were learning to be parent and teacher; year two was marked by explicit teaching; year three and beyond parents became facilitators and partners.

Components of a sociocultural model of living and learning were evident in each of the three case study homes. They included response and interaction, a relaxed structure, curriculum choice, blocks of time, and community involvement.

The concluding chapter discusses implications for further research in education and school reform.
To My Family

Philippians 3:7-14
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To my children, Julie, Andrea, and George Jr., who loved me, supported me, and made me laugh when I needed you most. I love you all very much!
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Major Field: Education

Studies in Reading, Early Literacy, and Reading Recovery

Studies in Professional Development

Studies in Curriculum
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CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

And the motives for choosing home-schooling, at least [for some]...aren't the stereotypical fanaticism of one kind or another, but rather concerns that are decidedly rational: In particular...the need to customize the education of young people, taking into account the unique nature of every human being--and noting the challenge of rapidly changing economy and technology that will put a premium on flexibility....Classroom instruction, by contrast, emphasizes a uniform, one-size-fits-all approach to learning and viewing the world that can retard real education, at least for some children.

Editorial in the Orange County Register August 13, 1996

Many parents have chosen to home educate their children in the past twenty years. This movement is growing at an annual rate of 15 percent (Ray, 1996) and families are keeping their children home for longer and longer periods of time. Support groups and community opportunities abound for these young people who chose not to go back to school. Many are currently attending colleges and universities and are themselves advocates of this unusual mode of education.
What is it that we know about these families? Who engages in home schooling and what are their goals and motivations for taking on this responsibility? Do their goals and motivations change over time? How do they implement the curriculum they have chosen? Does the implementation change as parents become more adept at teaching? Does the role of the parent change as the children grow older? How do families integrate the demands of school with their personal lives?

Research in home education has increased significantly since the early 1980's when this movement began to grow. Quantitative studies have become available regarding orientation and philosophy, family characteristics, motivations, academic achievement, social and psychological profiles, legislation, and organizational support structures.

More recently, a small amount of qualitative research has begun to emerge. This is primarily composed of case studies that include topics such as school-family relations, policy issues, teaching children to read, home schoolers as high schoolers, and home schoolers as adults.

**Orientation and Philosophy**

The orientation and philosophy of education vary greatly among home school families. This movement began in the 1960's and 1970's when men such as Ivan Illich (1970) and Paulo Freire (1970) questioned the success, goals, and accomplishments of public education. Many professional educators such as Herbert Kohl (1970) and John Holt (1969) had a significant impact as each supported more individualized and flexible pedagogical learning environments. Through their writings, arguments were provided for the view "that parents can teach better than schools" (Knowles, Marlow &
Muchmore, 1991), and suddenly, parents teaching at home became an option (Holt, 1969; Moore and Moore, 1975).

Many early home schools had liberal and humanistic orientations, but as the movement became more popular, those with more conservative viewpoints also began to participate. Van Galen (1986) identified two groups of parents, labeling them the pedagogues and the ideologues.

The pedagogues were child centered and developed curriculum around their children's interests and ability levels. These parents believed they could provide a richer and more responsive environment for their children. This group of parents was very independent and described education as “pathologically bureaucratic and inefficient” (Knowles, Marlow, Muchmore, 1991).

The ideologues created a formal learning environment that very much imitated the school environment except that they selected the curriculum their children would use. This group consisted mainly of religious parents who wanted to control the content of what their children were taught.

**Demographic, Motivational, Academic, and Social Research**

In addition to examining the orientation and philosophical beliefs of home schoolers, much of the research concentrates on demographic features (Gustavsen, 1981; Wartes, 1988; Wright, 1988; Mayberry, 1989; Ray, 1990; Ray, 1997) and the particular motives parents have for wanting to home school (Gustavsen, 1981; Gustafson, 1988; Knowles & Hoeffler, 1988). The most recent demographic studies say that families have more children than the average American family, most are Caucasian, and nearly all the families have both parents in the home (Ray, 1997). Home school families are slightly
below the national median income, and ninety percent claim Christianity as their religious affiliation.

Academic achievement has been studied (Frost, 1988; Mayberry, 1988a; Ray, 1989; Home School Legal Defense Association, 1994; Ray, 1997). Home schooled children score well overall and achievement has not been shown to be affected by parental education, family income, or type of curriculum.

There is a limited amount of research on the social and psychological development of home schooled children (Taylor, 1986; Hedin, 1991; Kelley, 1991; Shyers, 1992; Medlin, 1994; Tillman, 1995). Studies show that families are active in their communities and the children are not as peer dependent or aggressive as non-home schooled friends. Only a small amount of research has been conducted on student perspectives (Shirkey, 1987; Llewellyn, 1993; Sheffer, 1995).

**Legislation**

The Home School Legal Defense Association, now based in Purcellville, Virginia, was established in 1983 in Washington state by a home school father who was an attorney. At that time, home schooling was only legal in three states. Mainly due to the efforts of his organization, home education is now legal throughout the United States even though there are differing rules and regulations among the states (Ray, 1997).

Parents nearly always won the right to educate their children in the early law suits (Ritter, 1979; Rose, 1985) and legislation and court actions were the most critical topics of research in the 1980’s (Zirkel & Gluckman, 1983; Wendel, 1986). Many home schoolers have become politically active
as a result of fighting for their right to home school. Several, both parents and home school graduates, are currently serving as senators and representatives in many states across the nation (Farris, 1997).

Proactive National Organizations

Political information and advice in working with local school districts, state boards, and state and national representatives and senators is readily available through proactive national organizations such as the Home School Legal Defense Association and The Rutherford Institute. These organizations provide legal protection for member families and ongoing updates regarding legislation that occurs at the national level. Besides having organized and effective telephone trees, these organizations are all interconnected on line and provide weekly as well as daily news updates.

Internal Organization

State organizations for home school families are large and well organized. Many states sponsor annual conventions with attendance numbering in the thousands (Farris, 1997). Workshops and seminars led by curriculum specialists as well as veteran home school parents are highlighted.

Keynote speakers such as Peter Marshall and Raymond Moore attend to encourage and teach, and curriculum and software companies sell their newest products and distribute catalogs. Parents gather materials for the coming year and compare notes on the latest methods and newest curriculums, many created and sold by home schoolers themselves. Many state organizations also have monthly and bimonthly magazines which they distribute to members.
Local Support Groups

Local home school support groups are extremely active and well organized too. Parents team up to share academic teaching responsibilities and babysitting. Many groups support a concept often referred to as “activity days” in which several families come together on a regular basis to create opportunities for their children to participate in field trips, science projects, drama, sports, art, or music activities (Farris, 1997). Many groups provide workshops for new home school families which include information on notification, scheduling, curriculum, and record keeping. Monthly newsletters, e-mail, and organized telephone lists are important communication vehicles within the groups.

Academic Services

In addition to the national, state, and local networking, there are many academic services available to home educators. Periodicals written especially for the home school community are numerous and typically address teaching methods, curriculum suggestions, learning styles, and advice on organizing daily schedules. The Home Education Magazine sends free e-mail newsletters monthly, and web services provide academic assistance and online discussion opportunities for adults.

While these studies provide insight into orientation and philosophy, demographics, motivational, academic, social, legislative, and organizational research, little is known about the day to day operations of these families and how this changes over time.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the curricular motives and intentions of the parents when they first began to home educate and to see how they implemented these choices and goals after home schooling for a minimum of three years. Even though existing studies explain a great deal about who and why families choose to home school, there is a dearth of information regarding what happens within the home school itself, especially after the family has been home schooling for an extended period of time. Curriculum can be listed or examined, and a day or a week in the life of a home school family can be described, but no study has been found that describes the motives, goals, perceptions, and curricular implementation of the home school and how that changes over time.

By using an interview format, questions were asked about why the family originally decided to home school, what curriculum was used, and how they taught from year to year. Finally, I asked why they continued to home school, what their current perceptions were, and what materials they were currently using. I again focused on implementation. Secondly, I chose three of the families to observe over a six week period of time. I wanted to see what their home school looked like and whether or not their perceptions matched what I thought was happening.

In the following chapters this study will examine 17 families that have home schooled for three to ten years. Because accessing these families can be difficult for a researcher, I spent one year previous to the study attending support group meetings, curriculum book fairs, and local seminars. I attended two state conventions and I also gave occasional free workshops making myself available to members of a very large local support group for curriculum
questions and occasional advice for children with learning disabilities. It was curious but not extraordinary that I attended these events as I had, myself, home schooled, and in the summers did narrative assessments for home schoolers that chose not to do standardized testing.

In the first stage of this study, I spent six months, from January to June, 1998, interviewing families that had either volunteered or been invited to participate in the study. I asked them to explain why they decided to home school and then to describe their home schooling experience from the first year to the present.

In the second stage, during the fall of 1998, I observed three families on a weekly basis and wrote extensive field notes on how their schools operate currently. Included in this second stage was on-going participant observation at extracurricular events and document analysis of the participants’ curricular records from past years.

In the chapter that follows, I will present a literature review of the research that has been done over the last twenty years. Chapter three will describe the methodology that was used. Chapter four is divided into three sections beginning with parental motivations and the first year. Section two describes the curricular and instructional changes families implemented year two, and the third section describes how they currently select and implement curriculum and how their children are being taught. Chapter five contains three case studies, each describing the family’s journey from the beginning, and highlighting specific struggles and successes they have encountered along the way. Chapter six discusses a new model of teaching and learning, as well as the implications and problems that may be inherent to adapting this format to all students.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

According to recent statistics released by the Ohio State Board of Education, Ohio ranks third in the nation in numbers of children being homeschooled. Estimates range from 45,000 to 50,000 children altogether. Nationally, current numbers range from 700,000 (Lines, 1991) to 1.23 million (Farris, 1997). This means that approximately one to two percent of the children in the United States are currently being homeschooled.

Ray (1997) estimates that there could be 2.3 million or more home educated children in the United States by the school year 2003-2004. This represents a potential of approximately four percent of the entire school-age population (United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993; in Ray, 1997).

Research in home education has increased significantly since the early 1980's when this movement began to grow. Quantitative studies have become available that describe family characteristics, academic achievement, and social development. More recently, a small number of qualitative studies have begun to emerge. These studies include topics such as: reasons families have chosen to home school, home school policies,
legal issues, case studies, school-family relations, and home schoolers as adults. This chapter will present a brief review of recent research.

Demographics

Basic Demographic Characteristics

One of the earliest demographic studies was done by Gustavsen (1981). He surveyed 150 home schoolers in 44 states and analyzed data that included demographic, psychological, and academic profiles. His families lived in small urban or rural areas and came from diverse, non-traditional religious backgrounds. Household incomes ranged from $15,000 to $20,000 per year; mothers did the primary teaching and fathers were professionals or skilled workers who attended college one or more years. In his psychological profile he found that the parents attended church regularly and were politically conservative.

The research population for Gustavsen’s (1981) study was taken from the Hewitt-Moore Foundation. Serving primarily a religiously based home school population, other researchers have questioned the reliability of these samples because they may fail to include home school families that are non-religious. Another concern has been that since certain states and school districts are less friendly to home educators, some parents tend to be very private and would not freely share information (Mayberry, 1988).

Researching home school families is difficult because accessing them is a problem for ‘outsiders’ (Taylor, 1986; Wright, 1988; Morris, 1992; Strange, 1994). Most studies represent small groups of participants and usually information is obtained from just one parent. Home schools that have not been successful are not represented.
Survey studies have given us some insight into the characteristics and basic demographic information surrounding these families. A significant study in Oregon of 461 families was done by Mayberry (1988a) that focused on demographic and motivational information. The results were compared to national norms and were, interestingly, very similar to Gustaven's (1981) findings seven years earlier.

Mayberry concluded that home school parents tended to have more education when compared to the population of Oregon in general and that these families were typically more economically stable. Her families lived in more rural environments and many held professional positions. Most attended church on a regular basis and were more conservative politically than the population at large. Studies conducted by Wartes (1987) and Ray (1990) reported similar findings.

Most recently, a nationwide study was conducted by Ray (1997) in which 5,402 children from 1,657 families participated. All the states, Washington D.C., and three United States territories were represented. The sample was drawn from the membership of a large nationwide home education organization as well as other organizations and lists that were provided to the researcher.

Overall, the ‘typical family profile’ changed very little from the previous studies except that the level of education of the parents increased slightly as did the average income. The only other noticeable difference was the number of years the parents intended to home school. As the movement matures, families are home schooling for longer and longer periods of time.

The following are characteristics cited by Ray (1997): families averaged two to three children and 38 percent of them had four or more
children, which is much larger than the average family size in the United States. Married couples headed 98 percent of the families and the average age of children being home schooled was 10.5 years. Parents planned to home educate 76 percent of all currently-home educated children through the 12th grade. Ninety five percent of the study group was Caucasian and 34 percent of the fathers were professionals, with an additional 11 percent classifying themselves as small business owners. In 84 percent of the families mothers were homemakers and only 16 percent of the mothers worked outside the home.

Thirty one percent of the fathers and 31 percent of the mothers held bachelor’s degrees. Fifteen percent of the fathers and eight percent of the mothers had master’s degrees. Twenty three percent of the fathers and 26 percent of the mothers held high school degrees. The median family income was $43,000, and Ray reports that the United States median was $47,062 when this survey was done.

Parents spent an average of $546 per child per year for educational materials with the median at $400. Computers were owned by 86 percent of the families and parents said they averaged approximately four library visits per month. Mothers did 88 percent of the formal instruction and fathers did 10 percent. Approximately two percent of the instruction was done by someone other than a parent. Six percent of the fathers and 15 percent of the mothers had been certified teachers.

Ninety percent of the parents claimed Christianity as their religious affiliation. This included Evangelicals, Catholics, and Fundamentalists. Grandparents supported the practice of home educating in 67 percent of the
families and 22 percent of the grandparents were neutral. Eleven percent said they were opposed to home education.

Motives for Teaching Their Children at Home

Mayberry (1988) found that out of the 461 families she surveyed in Oregon 65 percent were motivated by religious beliefs. Other major reasons cited were academic achievement (22 percent) and a positive social environment (11 percent). Peer influences in the schools was listed as a major concern. New Age philosophy was mentioned by two percent as their primary reason to home school.

Fegley’s (1993) Connecticut study included questionnaires and on-site interviews with 66 families. He reported that 23 percent of the parents cited religious convictions, 20 percent had academic concerns, and three percent desired a more positive social environment as the reasons they chose to home educate. In combination with the previously listed reasons, family unity and relationships were mentioned by 44 percent of the parents. Nine percent of the families reported health, self-esteem, rights of children, self-responsibility, and music instruction as additional reasons for home schooling.

Van Galen (1986) thinks that altering the curriculum in public schools would not affect parents’ decision to home educate. Families contend they can do a superior job academically, morally, and/or socially (Van Galen, 1987; Gustafson, 1988; Mayberry, 1988b). Montgomery (1989) says that after parents have their children home for a while, they...
feel the conditions in the school are no longer relevant to their decision to home school. They are having so much fun with their kids, so enjoying being with them, learning with them, seeing them free to develop their various potentials...that there is no way they would give up their home schooling. "Our children are the finest people we know’ ...these are parent comments about teenagers, not about six and seven year olds (p.9).

Research on Learner Outcomes

Academic outcomes. Of the studies that have been done regarding academic achievement, home school children are reported to be at or above grade level on standardized achievements tests (Linden, 1983; McCurdy, 1985; Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1985; Feinstein, 1986). Gustavsen's survey (1981) revealed that of the 71 families in his study that had administered standardized achievement tests, the average home school child tested “above average.” The Alaska Department of Education (1985) found scores on standardized tests significantly improved as compared to in-school students after two years of home study.

The Tennessee Department of Education (1986) examined reading and math scores of 212 home schooled children in grades two, three, six, and eight. Home educated children scored better than their public school peers on seven of the eight comparisons. The Tennessee Department of Education also reported second grade home school Stanford Achievement Test scores. The children’s reading average was at the 85th percentile and the math average was at the 91st percentile.
Scogin (1986) did a random sample of 300 families from the membership list of the Home School Legal Defense Association and found that in reading nine percent of the children were below grade level, 18 percent were at grade level to 11 months above, and 73 percent were one year or more above grade level. In math, 21 percent of the home schooled students were below grade level, 29 percent of the children were at grade level, and 50 percent were above grade level.

Wartes (1988a, 1988b) studied 426 home school students and found that academic achievement is not negatively affected by the level of parent education, length of time children are home schooled, family income level, method of instruction, or curriculum used. Quine and Marek (1988) reported that home school students "...far surpass[ed] the 'average child' or what is referred to as the national averages." No studies were found, however, that attempted to control comparisons for socioeconomic status, parents' educational backgrounds, intelligence, or other factors that have been found to be directly related to achievement.

Ray (1988) suggests several hypotheses for why the home school child may be scoring well on achievement tests. These include the fact that parents may be teaching to the tests, there is a low ratio between student and teacher, and/or there may be an effect from the high levels of parental involvement that has been shown to have positive effects on learning (Keeves, 1975). Ray (1988) also suggests, however, that it is difficult to make definitive comparative statements between home school children and conventionally schooled children because many home school parents do not use standardized tests or standardized curriculum.
Social and psychological outcomes. Home schoolers do not seem to be negatively affected socially or psychologically (Holt, 1981; Kitchen, 1991). Delahooke (1986) compared the socialization of 28 home educated children to 32 private school students. Both groups were an average age of 9.1 and comparable in gender, intelligence, and socioeconomic class. She administered the Roberts Apperception Test for Children which measures aspects of personality. Both groups measured in the 'well-adjusted range' but there was a difference in the non-family categories. The private school students were more peer oriented and more peer dependent than those that studied at home.

Taylor (1986) analyzed a nationwide sampling of 224 children in grades 4 through 12. Using the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale, he found higher self-concept among home educated pupils for the global and all subscale scores.

Wartes (1987) studied the amount of time 217 Washington home school families spent involved in activities with peers and adults outside the home. He found that 40 percent spent more than 30 hours per month with similar aged peers and 53 percent spent 20 to 30 hours per month participating in community activities.

Montgomery (1989) interviewed 55 home school parents and 87 home school pupils ages 10-21. She found that the children in her study were not isolated from social interaction with their peer group and that home school students seemed to participate in as many extracurricular activities as did their public school counterparts. She also stated that leadership qualities were not repressed and, in fact, seemed to be nurtured through their parents' leadership example.
Webb (1989) examined aspects of the adult lives of people who had been home schooled. Socially, the home schoolers were often more adept than their counterparts who had been traditionally schooled. However, Chatham (1991) compared public and home educated children and found that home schoolers feel less close to their peers and receive less support from their friends.

Shyers (1992) compared the assertiveness and self concepts of 140 Florida children between eight and ten years of age. Half were from traditional schools and half were home schooled. She used the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Children's Assertive Behavior Scale. Rating forms were filled out for each child by two observers. Ratings indicated that the traditionally schooled children were considerably more aggressive, loud, and competitive, and that the home educated students displayed a significantly lower number of problem behaviors. Shyers concluded that a child's social development is healthier when they spend more time with adults than peers.

It seems from the research that home school families do not isolate themselves and that there is high involvement within their communities. Research also suggests that home educated children are less peer dependent and less aggressive then their age mates in public schools.

Curriculum and Instruction

Researchers have described the philosophy of home schools as running the gamut from John Holt's unschooling approach to the regimented use of structured, commercial curricula designed primarily for classrooms.
However, there is only a limited amount of research involving the direct observations of home schools (Reynolds, 1985; Beaven, 1990; Mattingly, 1990; Knowles, 1991; Nicol, 1993; Taylor, 1993; Cappello, 1995; Balwitt, 1997).

Reynolds (1985) did three case studies to describe how home school families operate on a day-to-day basis. Each family had a regular daily routine in which part of the school day was organized by the parents and part was organized by the children where they were allowed to choose their activities. All three families, however, spent most of the day doing something school-related. He also found that the children were given many choices when curriculum decisions were made.

Van Galen (1986) interviewed 23 parents from 16 families and found that most home educating parents used traditional teaching methods and materials and that the curricular design did not exemplify the creative and flexible models of learning that were promoted by Holt (1981) and Moore & Moore (1984). She found that at least half of the parents used correspondence programs when they first began. Home schooling was very similar to traditional classrooms in that workbooks were used and subjects were compartmentalized.

Knowles (1988), in his study of 12 Utah families, found that most home educating parents modeled their own school experiences and used the same approaches they disliked in formal schools. He found very little instructional variety and few parents that could expedite learning beyond competitive and conventional approaches.

Ray (1988) surveyed the research and described home schools as flexible and individualized, using both homemade and purchased curriculum.
Home educated children averaged three to four hours a day of formal study and spent additional time in individual learning activities. Parents included a wide range of topics in their children's curriculum but focused on math, reading, and science.

Beaven (1990) did a phenomenological study of 29 families over a five year period of time. She states that the message from the participants was that “living and learning cannot be separated” and that learning must be based in life experiences “occurring as the child is ready and in the direction of his interests.” She concludes that key components to “connected learning” are the home, time, trust, freedom, and community.

Mattingly (1990) wanted to study the instructional environments of home schools. His study included 20 volunteer families from local support groups. He observed and interviewed each family, then completed a TIES Summary/Profile sheet. [TIES stands for The Instructional Environment Scale.] This is a clinical instrument that allows qualitative appraisals about instructional environments. Mattingly concluded that there was great variability within the home schools; yet, there was also extensive use of commercially-prepared self-paced programs. A one-on-one teaching style was preferred by most parents. He states, however,

The most striking environmental aspect of home schools was not one directly related to instruction. It was a sense of love and concern that each home school parent demonstrated toward the child. This could be witnessed repeatedly in touches, smiles, hugs, and tone of voice at all research sites. Also apparent in the overall environment at nearly every research site was a relaxed, supportive, and cooperative atmosphere (p.105).
Parker (1992) sent out a questionnaire that surveyed 84 Texas families. Regarding curriculum, he found that “tradition and textbooks determined most of the content and sequence but informality and flexibility characterized the methods described.” Home school parents reported that their children spent less time in formal studies than conventionally schooled children spent.

In Fegley’s (1993) study of 66 families he found that initially many home school families purchased a curriculum package intended for classroom use but subsequently added curricula from other sources, including educational computer software. The major curriculum publishers used by home schoolers were A Beka, Accelerated Christian Education, Alpha Omega, Advanced Training Institute of America, Bob Jones University Press, Clonlara, Rod and Staff, and Weaver Curriculum. The families in Fegley’s study described themselves as structured without being rigid and stated that they used curriculum “in a flexible way depending upon the interest and ages of the children.” Social activities and field trips supplemented their educational activities.

Nicol (1993) examined the pedagogical interactions between parents and their children in a non-sectarian home schooling support group. Through informal interviews, attendance at support group meetings and outings, and the literature on home schooling, she tried to determine how the pedagogical practices of these home schoolers differed from the pedagogical practices of professional educators. She states that parents provide an
alternate framework for child-centered learning which focuses on the child's natural curiosity. She continues:

Initially I was discouraged by the content of my field notes; there seemed to be no evidence of "teaching." As the months passed I became more aware of the true nature of the pedagogical interactions between home schooling adults and their children -- pedagogical interactions that are educational without being based on a stated or formal curriculum. The pedagogical interactions of home schoolers are directed toward the personal growth of each child, in all its facets, not the acquisition of content (p.54).

Taylor (1993) did three case studies that showed the diversity even within families that had similar ideological beliefs. She assigned names to each family describing how they operated their home school. One was called The School Built at Home because their school looked very similar to a private school. The second was referred to as The Oatmeal for Dinner school because it showed how a purchased curriculum could be so demanding that even dinner time would be altered in order to complete the written work. Taylor called her third study family the Not Running a Little School at Home because the parent used discretion in making assignments and did not let the curriculum determine her priorities.

Cappello (1995) interviewed and observed four home school families in Connecticut. Her findings revealed that these families started with a structured curriculum that was later altered and seemed to become more activity centered as the families became more familiar with home schooling.
Cappello's families had great variety in their instructional methods including extracurricular activities, hands on instruction, and field trips.

Researchers have found great variability among the families regarding motives to home educate, educational philosophy, day to day operations, and curriculum choice. While a few studies have described home schools on a daily basis, none could be found that looked at how purpose and curriculum changed over time. This study will seek to increase understanding of how home school families make their curricular choices from year to year.

Summary

Understanding why families choose to home school is important to the professional education community as well as to the nation at large. It is critical to know how these children are learning and how their parents, who for the most part are not professional educators, are teaching them. Several quantitative studies have reported that these children do as well as the national population on standardized tests (Ray, 1997), but there is little information regarding how instruction takes place and how it might change over time.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine families that had home schooled for at least three years and to gain an understanding about why they chose to home school and then, how they incorporated school into their lives. Because the focus was change over time, I wanted to compare the materials the families used the first, second, and third year of home schooling and then find out how they made these curricular decisions and actually implemented the curriculum. The families had varying reasons for beginning their home school experience, and even though they were not selected to participate for any particular reason other than their willingness to share information, all of them state emphatically that home schooling for high school, if they are not already doing so, is likely.

This qualitative study used a naturalistic inquiry design to study home school families. Since access is often difficult, I spent nearly a year attending support group meetings, curriculum fairs, and home school activity days becoming familiar with the movement and allowing families to become comfortable with me. During stage one, I met with 17 families from central Ohio that had been home schooling for three or more years and conducted a
standardized, open-ended interview with each one. For the second part of the study, I made weekly visits to three different families and spent additional time going to home school events with the children. Document analysis was also included with the case study families.

Access

Gaining access to the home school community is a slow, deliberate, and labored process. Several studies have stated or alluded to the fact that access is difficult, if not impossible, because families are reluctant to expose themselves to others who may disapprove of their methods or their right to home educate at all (Reynolds, 1985; Van Galen, 1987; Wright, 1988; Beaven, 1990; Strange, 1994; Cappello, 1995).

Background

When I home schooled my own three children from 1983 to 1995, I was one of the 'pioneers.' Support groups and community networking were not easily available. In fact, for the first five years that I was home schooling, I knew less than twenty other families in the greater Columbus metropolitan area that were also home educating, though I am sure there were several more.

Home schooling becomes legal. In 1989 the State Regulations for home educators were finally completed. With their publication and the prominence of the National Home School Legal Defense Association, home
education officially became legitimate in Ohio. Many families that had been home schooling underground began to surface and become acquainted with each other.

The Ohio Regulations stated that all families that chose to home school were required to notify their school district each autumn before the official school year began. After families had home educated for one year, they had to either have standardized testing done for their children or meet with a currently certified teacher to have their children’s school work assessed (State Regulations, 1989). During the winter of 1992 I enrolled in a workshop taught by one of the home school representatives who actually helped to write the State Regulations with the Ohio State Board of Education. That summer I began to do ‘narrative assessments’ for the home schooling community.

I have never participated as an active member in a local support group. Because entrance into the world of support groups for a nonparticipant would be suspect, I knew that I would have to work at gaining the complete trust of those I wanted to invite to be a part of my dissertation study.

Free workshops. During the winter of 1996-1997 I contacted a local support group leader and offered to do a free literacy workshop for parents who were having trouble teaching their children to read. My offer was enthusiastically received and in the spring of 1997 I presented two seminars for interested parents.

The seminars were well attended, and subsequently the support group leadership invited me to present a summer workshop to new members
explaining narrative assessments, keeping academic records, and state notification procedures. I presented this workshop free of charge in August.

Entre. That fall I asked the leadership of the support group to place me on the mailing list for the monthly newsletter. During the 1997-1998 school year I attended various home school support group meetings including the group’s weekly ‘activity days,’ a used book sale, a high school curriculum information night, a ‘Mom’s Night Out’ and an all day seminar that was presented by the state leadership for local support group leaders from all over Ohio. I always called first and asked the sponsors if I could attend these functions; permission was always graciously granted. In each of these instances, I attended simply as an observer. On a few occasions, however, the group drew me in by asking questions about my own family or about assessments or curriculum in general.

Participant request. In January of 1998 I placed a small ad in the support group newsletter asking for families that might be willing to participate in my dissertation study about curriculum. I had eight replies over the next two months. In addition, I contacted a close friend who home schools. She is the unofficial coordinator for a small group that meets on the west side of Columbus, and through her urgings two families from her group agreed to participate. I personally asked two additional families because I had done occasional assessments for them in the past and thought they would be an interesting addition to the study. They also agreed.

In the spring, the local support group leader encouraged me to contact four additional families from her group that she thought would be willing if I
asked them personally. Each of them also consented. Lastly, I invited the local support group leader and she agreed. In all, eight families volunteered and nine families accepted the invitation when asked.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to gain more in-depth knowledge about why and how families home school. There have been surveys and some case studies done, but no studies could be found that described how the families change as they home school for an extended period of time, and no study could be found that addressed specifically how the role of the parent as teacher evolved. I wanted to look at how curricular choices changed from year to year, and why so many families had decided to educate their high schoolers.

The questions this study asked were:

1) Why did parents decide to home educate initially?
2) What curriculum was used initially and how did that change over time?
3) What was the first year like?
4) What changes occurred during the second year of home schooling?
5) What changes occurred during the third year of home schooling?
6) What were the current perceptions of the home school parents regarding home education?
7) What does each family’s home school look like now?
Theoretical Framework

I approached this study from a constructivist paradigm; therefore, qualitative methods were chosen. I was an active learner and refined my perceptions as I gained more knowledge and experience with the families.

Naturalistic Inquiry

This qualitative design comes from a naturalistic inquiry research paradigm which is defined as a

...discovery-oriented approach that minimizes investigator manipulation of the study setting and places no prior constraints on what the outcomes of the research will be. [It is a] dynamic, process orientation not tied to a single treatment and predetermined goals or outcomes... whereby the evaluator sets out to understand and document the day-to-day reality of the setting or settings under study, making no attempt to manipulate, control, or eliminate situational variables or program developments, but accepting the complexity of a changing program reality. The data of the evaluation include whatever emerges as important to understanding the setting (Guba, 1978 in Patton, 1990: 41,42).

Most interviews were done in the family's homes, and sometimes other family members were present while the interview was occurring. When
I attended home school events, I dressed like the crowd and kept a low profile. I wanted participants to regard me as friendly and curious, not threatening.

An inductive approach. As I began the interview process, I quickly realized that my original questions were not sufficient to explain everything that was happening in these settings or in the life experiences of these families.

The strategy of inductive designs is to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be (Patton, 1990: 44).

...general patterns across cases may be identified when case materials are content analyzed, but the initial focus is on full understanding of individual cases before those unique cases are combined or aggregated. This means that findings will be grounded in specific contexts; theories that result from the findings will be grounded in real-world patterns (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 in Patton, 1990: 45).

As a result of the first four interviews, I realized that my questions had to be broadened to include several additional areas and experiences that the parents identified as ‘curriculum.’ Once I was able to define ‘school’ as the parents did, the descriptions and information I was gathering became much more meaningful and revealing.
A holistic perspective. This study included 23 months of attending state and local home school events, and numerous visits to activities in which home school children participated. I initially attended these events because I wanted to familiarize myself with the particular activities and have the home school parents get to know me in a casual way. However, the further into the study I got, the more I realized how integral all these outside events were to the whole process of home education.

...striving to understand a phenomenon or program as a whole. The evaluator searches for the totality -- the unifying nature of particular settings. This holistic approach assumes that the whole is understood as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its parts. It also assumes that a description and an understanding of a person’s social environment ...is essential for overall understanding of what is observed (Patton, 1990: 49).

...to search for thematic wholes in programs. The challenge for the participant observer is “to seek the essence of the life of the observed, to sum up, to find a central unifying principle (Bruyn, 1966: 316 in Patton, 1990: 51).

Guba (1978) has depicted the practice of naturalistic inquiry as a wave on which the investigator moves from varying degrees of a “discovery mode” to the varying emphasis of a “verification mode” in attempting to understand the real world. As the research begins, the investigator is open to whatever emerges from the data, a discovery or inductive approach. Then, as the inquiry reveals patterns and major dimensions of interest, the investigator will begin to focus on verifying and elucidating what appears to be emerging—a more deductive approach to data collection and analysis (in Patton, 1990: 59).
The goal of holistic ethnography is to describe and analyze the culture as seen by the participants. Because this research was multi-faceted and emergent, hypotheses were formulated and reformulated throughout the study. For example, at the beginning I believed that I would see parents of elementary age children move from a more structured workbook approach to a unit studies format. That was not necessarily the case. I also thought that parents would be more structured once their children were in high school. Neither was this necessarily true.

By looking at both the social and the individual home contexts, I believe that I had a unique view of how home schooling is seen, defined, and experienced by the participants.

Theoretical Assumptions

The primary goal of this study was to provide a chronological description of the experiences families go through as they acclimate and learn to home school over a period of three or more years. Specific attention was given to how parents select materials, find resources, and then how they implement their curricular choices. I also looked at how the parent/teacher role and the original motivations and goals changed over time. Underlying the collection and analysis of data is the theoretical premise of teaching and learning as a socially constructed and dynamic process. According to Dewey (1916),

31
The social environment...is truly educative in its effects in the degree in which an individual shares or participates in some conjoint activity. By doing his share in the associated activity, the individual appropriates the purpose which actuates it, becomes familiar with its methods and subject matters, acquires needed skill, and is saturated with its emotional spirit (p.26).

Implicit in this statement is the understanding that teaching and learning are "mutually constituting processes" and cannot occur separately (Rogoff, 1993). Knowledge is socially constructed and everyone who participates in the process is effected or changed.

Methods and Procedures

Two Stage Study

Stage one. This was a multi-site study conducted in two stages. The first stage was comprised of in-depth interviews with 17 families that were currently home schooling. I analyzed the data looking for patterns of similar experiences and patterns of change.

Stage two. The second stage involved selecting three families from the original 17 for further in-depth study. Observations, conversations with family members, participant observation, and document analysis were included in this second stage.
Data Collection

A Two Stage Study

The purpose of this study was two fold. First, I wanted to create a descriptive in-depth understanding of the goals, perceptions, and curricular implementation practices of home school families over time. Since interviewing is the most effective means by which a researcher can discover why people act as they do (Patton, 1990) it was an appropriate initial technique for this inquiry.

Secondly, this study sought to explore multiple data sources for “key linkages” and to discover patterns of generalization across the cases (Erickson, 1986). In order to actually see how these families implement their curriculum after three or more years of home schooling, I needed to spend time in their homes and watch how the curriculum was implemented. Therefore, I was primarily concerned with finding information-rich cases. For this stage, I chose purposeful intensity sampling to select three families that would provide the clearest examples through which I might portray curriculum implementation after three years (Patton, 1990).

Stage One

Selection of Interview Families

Subjects for the initial phase of this study were included because they 1) responded to an ad in a local support group newsletter and offered to participate, 2) were recommended by an insider who believed these
particular families were typical examples of home schoolers in her area, or 3) were acquainted with the researcher from past narrative assessments. Each of the families that volunteered to be in the study was permitted to participate. No families that were asked to participate declined. As Stake notes,

Individual cases may or may not be known in advance to manifest the common characteristics of this phenomenon. They may be similar or dissimilar, redundancy and variety each having voice. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases (Stake, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Selection of participant families. Families for the study were initially contacted by a monthly newsletter that goes out to members of a local support group. The support group leader was very supportive of this project and endorsed me personally. Eight families contacted me as a result of the newsletter over the next two months.

I personally asked two families to participate because I had done occasional narrative assessments for them in the past and I believed they offered interesting situations that would give the study more depth. I also asked the support group leader to be a participant because her experience with so many families would add another perspective others might not have.

In March I called a friend that had home schooled for several years and asked if she knew of any families that would be willing to participate. She suggested two families and both agreed. In late spring I talked again to
the support group leader and she suggested four additional families that she believed typified home schoolers she knew. Each of those families also agreed to participate in the study.

**Interviews.** Initially I interviewed 17 mothers from January through June, 1998. Only one interview included the father which was at the mother's request. Four of the interviews lasted approximately two hours; seven lasted three to four hours. I spent six to eight hours with three families, and the remaining three mothers did a combination of informal interviewing, narrative assessments, telephone conversations, and e-mail.

Interview questions during this first stage (See Appendix A) were presented in a standardized open-ended format, carefully worded and numbered with the goal of leading each respondent through the same sequence by asking the same questions with the same words (Patton, 1990). Each interview began with an explanation of the study and an assurance of anonymity.

The initial interview questions focused on gathering information about why the family decided to home school, and then asked the parents to describe their experiences and curricular choices year by year. Questions about the first year included gathering information about the circumstances surrounding the decision, how the family got information about various curriculums and correspondence schools, and whether or not they knew of others who were home schooling.

Questions regarding year two included information about changes the family made as a result of their first year experiences, the focus of instruction,
the role of the parent, and how the day was organized. Questions for year three and beyond included asking about current daily schedules and extracurricular activities, the role of the parent/teacher, curriculum selection and implementation, and other commitments the family or children had such as volunteering, apprenticeships, or work opportunities.

Finally, parents were asked to reflect back on their home school experiences and to comment on how they or their families had changed as a result of home schooling. Mothers were also encouraged to give advice to others who might be considering home schooling for the first time. When the interviews were complete, they were professionally transcribed word for word.

All the interviews seemed characterized by an earnestness on the part of the subjects to help me understand how their home school had evolved and operated. I was continually surprised at the candidness of each parent and humbled by their apparent trust and belief that sharing this information might help another home school family at a future time.

Setting. Twelve interviews took place in the family's home. In this way I had an opportunity to become familiar with the family's schooling environment. Two interviews took place in a church where I normally conduct narrative assessments each summer. The remaining three families were interviewed at home school events, year end narrative assessments, and on the telephone or e-mail.
Demographics of Participants

After the interviews were complete I asked the parents to fill out a demographic questionnaire that was patterned after the Ray (1997) study (See Appendix B). The following is a synopsis of the results.

Married couples headed up 100% of the families. Caucasians comprised 97 percent of the group; one parent was Japanese. Grandparents supported the practice of home educating in 54 percent of the families, 40 percent were neutral, and 6 percent were opposed.

Father’s education level. The father’s educational levels varied greatly (See Appendix B.1). One father had some secondary school, one was a high school graduate, three had Associate degrees, and seven had Bachelor’s degrees. Three fathers had achieved Master’s degrees, one had a Ph.D. in nuclear physics, and one had a J.D. in law.

Mother’s education level. The mother’s educational levels also varied (See Appendix B.2). Two mothers had a high school degree, two had some college, and two held Associate’s degrees. Seven of the mothers held Bachelor’s degrees and four had Master’s degrees.

Father’s occupation. Fathers were the main breadwinners in all of these families (See Appendix B.3). Their occupations included an attorney, a small business owner, two engineers, one graphic artist, one laborer, one minister, and five professionals. One father was a teacher, three held technical positions, and one was a truck driver.

Mother’s occupation. Mothers were qualified for a variety of occupations (See Appendix B.4). However, seventy six percent were full time homemakers/home educators and only twenty four percent worked outside the home. There was one chemical engineer, one graphic artist,
one journalist, one nurse, five professionals, three teachers, and two who
held technical degrees. Three mothers did not have an occupation.

**Family income.** Incomes ranged from $20,000 to over $50,000 per
year (See Appendix B.5). Three families were in the $20,000 to $29,999
range, four families were in the $30,000 to $39,999 range, three families
earned from $40,000 to $49,999, and seven families earned over $50,000.

**Number of children in family.** Families had from one to seven children
(See Appendix B.6). Three families had one child, five families had two
children, six families had three children, one family had four children, one
family had five children, and one family had seven children. The average
number of children per family was 2.8.

**Grade level of students in study.** Of the 35 children that were currently
being home schooled, thirteen (37 percent) were in grades Kindergarten
through fifth, eight (23 percent) were in grades six through eight, and fourteen
(40 percent) were in high school (See Appendix B.7). There were six
preschoolers, two elementary age children, and four post high school
children in these families that were not being home schooled.

**Number of years families have home schooled.** The average number
of years families had home schooled in this study was six (See Appendix
B.8). One family had home schooled for three years, five families for four
years, two families for five years, two for six years, two for seven years, two for
eight years, one for nine years, and two families for ten years.

**Visits to public library per month.** Families visited the library from once
or twice a month to over eleven times per month (See Appendix B.9). Four
families visited one to two times per month, nine families went three to four
times per month, two families went five to six times per month, and two families reported eleven to fifteen visits per month.

Annual amount spent on curriculum per student. Families spent from less than $200 per child per year on curriculum to over $1000 per year (See Appendix B.10). One family spent less than $200, five families spent from $200-$299, five families spent from $300 to $399, two families spent from $400 to $499, two families spent from $500 to $749, one family spent from $750 to $999, and one family spent over $1000. The average spent per child was $350.

Religious affiliation. Religious affiliation among the families also varied (See Appendix B.11). One family was Catholic, five called themselves Fundamental, and six families stated that they belonged to Independent churches. Three families attended Lutheran churches and two families had no religious affiliation.

Stage Two
Selection of Case Study Families

Three families from the original 17 were selected to be studied further in the fall of 1998. Being primarily concerned with information-rich cases for in-depth, descriptive study, I chose purposeful intensity sampling (Patton, 1990) to provide the clearest examples through which I might portray the substance of home school curriculum and instructional objectives and design. In intensity sampling, the cases that are selected ‘manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely but not extremely.’ They are cases which furnish excellent or rich examples of interest, but are not unusual cases.
Things that I considered when making the selection of the three case study families were: the openness of the families, their willingness to participate in extensive observations over a six week period of time, and the availability of records they had kept from previous years.

I also tried to select families that had different characteristics, maximum variation sampling, to see if, in the final analysis, there were any overall themes or patterns that might emerge (Patton, 1990). During this part of the study, it was particularly important for me to consciously think about objectivity and the assumptions that I brought as a past participant of home education. I did this by keeping a research journal with me at all times and recording my thoughts, reactions, and questions as they occurred. This journal proved to be enormously helpful later on when I started doing serious analysis because it helped me to sort out, more objectively, how the events fit into the categories and patterns that eventually emerged.

**Observation schedule.** Each of the three families I selected to be a case study agreed to participate. I observed them over a six week period of time. The first week I visited their homes two consecutive ‘school’ days, and over the course of the following five weeks I spent a minimum of one half day each week. These observations were done during a three month period in the fall of 1998; starting dates were staggered. I took extensive field notes and kept a research file.

**Researcher role.** While I was observing, the researcher role alternated between being an observer and a participant observer depending on the activities that were occurring. In two families, a preschool child was present and they sometimes sat next to me and colored or occasionally shared a brief conversation while I sat at the table and wrote my field notes.
The rest of the children ranged from ages 11 to 16, however, and they seemed to carry on with school as though I was not there.

**Participant observer.** During the 23 months of this study, I attended numerous home school functions that were sponsored by the local and state home school organizations. I accompanied case study children to many of their activities. I often attended the monthly support group meetings for parents, children’s activities such as art lessons and horse shows, and local events where home school children entered projects or participated. I attended an all day informational meeting of support group leaders from across the state, 4H meetings, Spanish lessons, activity days, home school book fairs, and two annual state conventions in 1997 and 1998. I agreed to oversee a local home school Spelling Bee which had several participants.

**Children’s interviews.** At the end of the observation period I interviewed the five children that were in the case study families. Again, I presented the questions in a standardized, open-ended format, carefully worded and numbered with the goal of leading each respondent through the same sequence by asking the same questions with the same words (Patton, 1990). Each interview was recorded and I transcribed them word for word.

**Field notes.** I took extensive field notes while observing home school functions, during visits to activities the case study children attended, and while I was in the homes of the case study families. During this two year period I kept a notebook with me at all times and made detailed notes as primary points of interest and themes began to emerge. Often I had informal conversations with parents and children and I also recorded those as accurately as I could as soon as I arrived home.
During the six months I was conducting the interviews I constantly thought about which families would be the most interesting and appropriate for further analysis in stage two. I expanded, reviewed, and analyzed the field notes on an on-going basis.

For instance, I began searching for and identifying consistent patterns regarding both cognitive and affective areas. Some of the questions I asked myself were, “How much curriculum shifting is occurring after the third year?” “Are the patterns different for the older children?” “How are the parents making the selections after they have been home schooling for an extended period of time?” “What are they basing their decisions on?” “How much input do the children have?”

The patterns led to the development of a working hypothesis which was tested and refined through further selective field observations and then triangulating the data with the parents or the children. As specific patterns emerged I began to select functions and contexts for further observation. I would always type up my observations within 24 hours of observing, and when possible, would share my observations with an insider.

*Researcher journal.* I also kept a researcher journal. I used this notebook to record personal notes and feelings that occurred as the study continued. Midway through the interviews, when patterns regarding family relationships, curriculum implementation, and parental role were beginning to emerge, I found myself thinking about who my real audience for this study would ultimately become.

Initially, I wanted to understand these families better for myself, so that I could service them in a more effective and efficient way as a professional educator. Gradually, however, I found myself thinking in terms of being able
to share this information with others: the research community, policy makers, school superintendents, teachers, and home schoolers themselves. How valuable it would be to explain the stages of struggle, frustration, and growth, and then, finally, to report how veteran home schoolers functioned and interacted within their homes and communities.

Home school literature. In addition to attending home school activities, I also read approximately thirty books about home schooling by authors as diverse as Raymond Moore and John Holt. Several books were written by home school moms as well as researchers who have done other studies on home education.

Additionally, I subscribed to an online monthly newsletter produced by the American Homeschool Association. I also subscribed to magazines such as The Teaching Home, Homeschooling Today, and Home School Digest. I have subscribed to the Home School Researcher, a refereed journal edited by Dr. Brian Ray, and the Court Report, published by the Home School Legal Defense Association, for many years.

Workshop presentations. During this time I was asked to present a workshop on portfolio assessments. On three different occasions I was invited to provide a seminar on children with reading disabilities, which I gladly did. On these occasions particularly, I was struck by the obvious need and desire within the home school community for professional knowledge and help with children who do not learn in conventional ways.
Data Analysis

Interview Questions

When I first started the interviewing process, I concentrated on exactly what curriculum the family was using, how they made their choice, and how they implemented it with their children. But the parents’ answers were much broader than my questions, and I soon realized that their definition of ‘school’ was much wider than I had originally anticipated when I made up the interview questions. I was going to have to rethink how to frame my study.

After approximately four interviews I wrote down all the different areas and activities that the parents had mentioned in relation to ‘school.’ There were several similar categories that emerged even within these four families. I made a diagram that included all the areas that were mentioned (Spradley, 1979). This ‘domain analysis’ diagram helped me to define what areas I needed to focus on and explore further. Then I rewrote the interview questions to include the areas and categories that were represented on this diagram.

Domain Analysis

By doing this domain analysis, I soon realized that dividing or segmenting the home school family’s day into ‘school activities’ and ‘home activities’ was going to be impossible. The two were inextricably intertwined, and unraveling them was not going to be plausible if I was going to present an accurate portrayal of home schooling from the participant’s point of view.

Parents’ categories. Parents explained that support group and community activities were very important and that they altered their
schedules to accommodate these occasions. Academic classes such as geography and science, and fine arts including art, music, drama, or physical education were among the activities mentioned. Field trips, volunteer and apprenticeship opportunities, 4H, scouts, and frequent visits to the library were also included. The interview questions were reworked again to include all these areas. As the domain analysis continued to take shape, it provided a more accurate picture of what 'school' looks like within these families.

Key areas in the study eventually included: library books, textbooks, computer, extracurricular and community activities, fine arts, volunteer experiences, apprenticeships, chores, employment, and record keeping (See Figure 3.1).

No typical day. Another interesting finding that began to emerge was that there was no 'typical day.' Parents described various activities that they participated in and considered 'school' and explained how their days and weeks, even though scheduled, remained flexible and open. Once I realized how much I needed to expand and redirect the questions, the information I gathered became much richer and meaningful, giving insights to many other areas of family living as well.

Curricular assumptions. Besides originally assuming that school and home activities were considered separate entities by the families, I had also assumed that when parents switched curriculum, they would make significant changes in the format of their home school. Neither of these assumptions proved true. This was another reason the interview questions had to be more open ended and nonspecific.
Figure 3.1: Domain Diagram
Domain Analysis Categories

**Library books, textbooks, and computer.** These categories, or some combination of them, were mentioned by everyone, without exception. All the families used the library on a regular basis, though their visits ranged from 2-15 times per month. All the parents mentioned textbooks, even though they were used very differently, family to family. All the families owned a computer and used it for school or school related activities.

**Extracurricular and community activities.** This area included topics as diverse as journalism, debate, guitar lessons, cake decorating, spelling bees, Spanish lessons, scouts, 4H, and field trips. Support groups met regularly to provide these academic as well as social activities.

**Fine arts.** All the children participated in some kind of fine arts activities ranging from fencing, swimming, and volleyball, to art, drama, and musical instruments. Several of these events or classes were available through the churches the families attended. There was also a significant amount of opportunity and activity during weekly support group meetings. Private lessons were also prominent.

**Volunteer.** This category included but was not limited to learning how to take tours of visitors through the Capitol Building downtown, working at the science museum, helping regularly with swim and gym days at the YMCA, and volunteering on a weekly or monthly basis at the Historical Village. Other activities included packaging flower bulbs as a fund raiser for a preschool, babysitting, and mowing lawns for elderly or disabled neighbors or friends.

**Apprenticeships.** Parents told me how they took advantage of apprenticeship programs even if they were very short term. Some of the
children shadowed veterinarians; some worked on computers, or in automotive garages. This area was dependent on the child's interest.

**Chores.** Family responsibilities and helping around the house was an important part of most home schoolers' days. This was so routine, however, that it was not usually mentioned until I asked the parents about it specifically. Mothers agreed, however, that they considered this area an important part of their 'school' day.

**Employment.** Several of the teens either currently worked or had worked in the past. Many of them had developed job opportunities from volunteering, apprenticing, or participating in community activities.

**Record keeping.** Many of the older children helped their parents with academic record keeping. This varied according to the child's age; the older ones were always expected to be much more helpful and independent.

**Interview Analysis Form**

As soon as the interviews were complete and the professional transcriptions done, an interview analysis form was filled out in which themes, impressions, summary statements, speculations, unusual patterns, and hypotheses were recorded (See Appendix D).

**Audio Tapes**

As I worked with both the audio tapes and the interview transcripts, I tried to familiarize myself with every nuance in each interview. I was attending a class in Dayton that summer and for two to three hours daily, I played the tapes over and over again as I traveled back and forth from Columbus.
Tentatively, I began to code the interviews for emergent patterns and categories. It was a process of cyclical analysis and it occurred again after each encounter with a study family or after another assessment with a home school family. I formed and reformed categories, trying to stay congruent with participant perspective (See Appendix E).

At the beginning of the analysis, I had approximately 17 categories that included major areas such as family adjustments, curriculum changes, and parents as learners. But soon I had to add new categories and enlarge those already defined. For instance, instead of one category for parents as learners, I needed: parents as learners, parent as parent, parent as teacher, parent as facilitator, and parent as partner. As I continued to study the transcripts and to immerse myself in the tapes, even more categories and patterns emerged. This time I had to add new categories such as long and short term goals, peer relationships, community volunteers and dialogue. I found myself coding and recoding, organizing and reorganizing, until finally, no new patterns appeared.

Categories and patterns emerge. The longer I did the study the more clearly defined the categories and patterns became. I made concentrated and systematic efforts to find connections within the data, finding relationships, and then sorting out what remained constant. It was a slow and arduous process that refused to be rushed.

As I did the analysis, I noticed that during the first year the experiences of the families who started out homeschooling with Kindergarten or first grade children were very different from the experiences of the families that pulled their children out of school. This created two very different categories of ‘first year’ families.
Through this evolving cyclical process of data collection, reduction, and analysis, I hoped that a clearer understanding of curricular implementation and the families' philosophy of education would emerge.

**Field Notes**

I took extensive field notes throughout this 23 month study. Analysis was ongoing which allowed me to cycle back and forth between thinking about existing data and collecting new data. Collection of new data and analysis were constantly interwoven.

My field visits were interspersed with time for data reduction, drawing conclusions, and for testing those conclusions against new data that I was collecting. I was constantly comparing what I was seeing and hearing in the group meetings, at the workshops and conventions, during the interviews and the narrative assessments, and then, finally, in each case study home.

For example, at one of the support group meetings a mother was crediting a certain curriculum for the successful completion of a particularly difficult year. This caused other families to react and compare their feelings about the curriculum. No one else liked it! Upon further discussion, however, a process was revealed that indicated to me that it probably wasn't the curriculum that had made this family's year successful; it was how the parent was interacting and instructing.

**Researcher Journal**

As noted earlier, I kept a journal with me throughout the study and constantly jotted down personal notes, feelings, questions, and anything at all that occurred to me during the course of this study. It proved to be a
valuable resource as I sorted out ideas, redid interview questions, and wrote down thoughts that I wanted to share with the families as the study continued. It also served me well as I began to write, helping me to differentiate between the objective and subjective, unsubstantiated assumptions, and predispositions that I brought to the study from my personal experience and from my readings.

Personal rationale for study. I did this study because I do portfolio assessments for home school families every summer and I wanted to better understand how these families make their curricular choices and actually implement their selections. Over the years I have found that I could anticipate many of the families' questions, depending on the length of time parents had been home schooling. Seeking clarification, and in the hope of being able to find overarching patterns, I decided to pursue these questions in dissertation format.

By the time the actual interviewing began I had participated in several support group activities and many members were becoming comfortable with me and were used to seeing me around. Combined with my past personal experience of home schooling and the rapport I had worked to establish with key insiders in the home school community, I hoped that I would be able to ask personal questions and receive honest, heartfelt answers without them fearing criticism or judgment. I believe I achieved that goal.

Cross-Case Analysis

Variable-oriented strategies. This was an additional approach I found useful in the cross-case analysis process (Huberman & Miles, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 436). It is an approach that finds themes that cut across cases.
By careful inductive coding, I found recurring themes such as 'teacher as facilitator' and 'concentration on weaknesses during the second year.'

**Pattern clarification.** Sometimes, a key variable surfaced during cross-site analysis. For instance, pattern clarification (Huberman & Miles, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 436) emerged when I realized that there were two communities that these families referred to: one was the family as community and the other was their outside involvement in community activities. Another example was when I began noticing the curricular implementation patterns such as the response and interactions between the parents and the children, the relaxed structure that characterizes their days, and the flexible yet structured daily schedule which included allowing the children to work in large, uninterrupted blocks of time.

**Triangulation**

**Cross Checking the Data**

Triangulation is an important aspect of any qualitative research study because there are always so many variables, often unknown to the researcher. This becomes particularly true when interviewing is the key collection strategy because so much hinges, as in this case, on recollection, opinions, personal beliefs, and attitudes. In this study especially, since parents were currently home schooling and because they had so much time and energy invested, it was very important to tease out subjective and objective assessments of current and past events. I made a conscious and concerted effort to explore every possible avenue that might either substantiate or invalidate my findings.
The term most often used in connection with analysis and confirmation issues is triangulation, a term with multiple meanings. The origin of the term is probably "multiple operationalism" (Campbell & Fiske, 1959): multiple measures that ensure that the variance reflected is that of the trait or treatment and not that associated with the measures. This is best done, for example, by multiplying independent measures and sources of the same phenomenon - for example, informants make the same claim independently, and the researcher observes the phenomenon; test scores back up work samples and observations. "Grounded" theorists have long contended that theory generated from one data source works less well than "slices of data" from different sources (Glaser, 1978 in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 438).

Second year families. In response to the previous quotation, in January and February I contacted two families that I had done 'first time' narrative assessments for the previous summer, in 1998. They were both currently in their second year of home schooling and I asked them if they would write up their experiences from year one and tell me what they were doing and experiencing currently.

I asked them to include their motives and goals for each year, their areas of academic concentration, and the materials they were using. I also asked them to discuss briefly their daily schedules. Both mothers did so, and each confirmed the patterns I had identified for both year one and year two families.
In addition, I had a 'panic' call from another second year mother whom I had never met. After talking and meeting with her, I was able to confirm, once again, the patterns that had emerged from my data for 'second year' parents.

Triangulation is less a tactic than a mode of inquiry. By self-consciously setting out to collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence, the researcher will build the triangulation process into ongoing data collection. It will be the way he or she got to the finding in the first place--by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources, using different methods, and by squaring the finding with others with which it should coincide (Huberman & Miles, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 438).

Summer assessments. Additionally, during the summer of 1998, between the time I had completed the interviews (and done extensive preliminary analysis) and the time when I would begin the case studies, I actually did approximately 60 summer assessments. During this time I paid special attention to first, second, and third year parents. Over and over again, preliminary interview patterns were confirmed.

Document analysis. Lesson plans and annual notification forms were collected and/or examined from 14 families in the study (Patton, 1990). These documents were important because they triangulated the information I had gathered during the interviews and also verified decisions the parents recalled from past years.
Children interviews. When the observations were complete, I interviewed the children who had been a part of the stage two case studies (See Appendix F).

In the interviews I asked the children to describe a typical school day, and then to recall how 'school' had changed over time. I invited them to tell me about their favorite subjects and activities, the books they liked to read, and what they did on the computer. I also asked them if they liked being home schooled and whether or not they would home school their own children.

Member checks. Member checks were particularly important because I believed that it was vital that the families have an opportunity to see what had been written about them before the information became public, even though the names had been changed. Also, had anyone not concurred with the major findings, it would have been serious cause for reexamining the analysis data.

The set should be credible to the persons who provided the information which the set is presumed to assimilate...Who is in a better position to judge whether the categories appropriately reflect their issues and concerns than the people themselves? (Guba, 1978:56-57)

Ten of the seventeen families that participated in this study took the time to read through the preliminary findings and give me written feedback.
In each case, the families concurred with the findings except for minor differences that were family specific.

A Final Word

This thesis is a presentation of home schooling from the parent’s point of view. What the parents told me was important to them. They presented their objectives, motivations, and goals in the hope of helping others see more clearly what they are about and what they are hoping to accomplish. It was also an attempt to portray their struggles and successes.

This dissertation is a presentation of the themes that were discovered while interviewing, observing, and spending time with the participants. It was not intended to be a manual for learning how to home school nor is it an in-depth description of the religious beliefs of the families. Even though many of the families were religious, religion did not play a controlling role in their decision to begin home schooling except in the case of one family.

All names have been changed to insure participant confidentiality. The actual language of the informants was used except in cases where clarification was needed in order not to distort meaning. Even though it is impossible to eliminate researcher bias, every attempt was made to do so. Personal feelings about the study were kept in a separate journal which was used to help me maintain an objective perspective.

An analysis note. I believe that many of the ‘strength of patterns’ that are referenced in Chapter Four are actually stronger than reported. Because the categories that are discussed emerged as the data was collected, it was not possible to assess their frequency accurately from the information I had.
gathered during the early interviews because specific questions regarding those areas were not asked.

For instance, there were no questions in the interview regarding how the children responded to their parents the first year or how they responded to being home schooled initially. Therefore, the finding about parents having to reestablish their authority was discovered through incidental comments the parents made as they discussed how difficult scheduling was the first year.

Another example is that there were no questions on the interview sheet asking parents how they taught. They simply explained how they went about using curriculum. When they discussed each subsequent year, however, it became obvious that their teacher role had, in fact, changed over time. After several interviews, the pattern became obvious.

Limitations

The first area of limitations has to do with the participants in the study, half of whom volunteered on their own and half of whom were asked to volunteer. Volunteers tend to be better educated and have higher social-class status than nonvolunteers (Borg & Gall, 1989). There could be skeptical questions from a critic of the movement about whether or not this sample was truly representative of all home school families.

Another limitation would be that the families in this study only represent those who have home schooled for a long period of time and have been able to adapt to this lifestyle. Those who were not successful or who chose to send their children back to school after a year or two are not
represented. Also, it is important to keep in mind that accessing these families is extremely difficult and only those who feel competent are likely to participate in a study such as this one.

A second area of limitations might be that the researcher has been a home schooler herself. Being aware that this bias could potentially affect the outcome in a truly 'open-ended' interviewing strategy, the format was designed to control the direction and sequence of the questions. It was important to be constantly aware of personal assumptions as I asked the interview questions, made the observations, and recorded the data. I also needed to be sure the findings could be adequately supported from the data collected. In order to do this, I kept a researcher journal with me at all times, and I was faithful about recording any thoughts that occurred to me. I constantly reminded myself that I needed 'researcher eyes' and that it was critical to report events as they actually occurred, keeping in mind that my goal was to present the parents' perspective.

A third area of limitations relates to the methodology. Unlike a public classroom that is open to scrutiny, most visits to home schools were prearranged or confined to a certain time of the day. It was important that as a researcher I gained the trust of the families so that flexibility and unpredictable visits could be incorporated into the study. This was true for each case study family. Also, the interviews were retrospective. Much of the information gathered relied on the parents' memories and were "self-reports."
Role management could have been a problem (Van Galen, 1986). Roles fluctuated from observer-as-participant to participant-as-observer. I needed to be constantly aware of the effects my presence had on the events that occurred.

Summary

This chapter presented a description of the methodology that was used to gather information about the curricular selections and instructional patterns in home school families and how they changed over time. All 17 families in the study had home schooled for at least three years, and over half had home schooled for more than six years.

Because it was a qualitative study framed in a naturalistic inquiry design, several methods of data gathering were used including interviews, case studies, participant observation, and document analysis. The study took place over a period of 23 months in order to confirm context validity and secure the trust of the participants. All data is presented from the parent’s point of view.

After four interviews a domain analysis was made because several topics emerged that I had not previously considered “curriculum.” Among them were volunteer activities, apprenticeships, and work opportunities. As a result of this activity, the interview questions were reworked so that these areas could be included.

Analysis was on going throughout the study. Every time a new interview was done or another event had been attended, I coded the materials and compared them to the data that had already been gathered. Whenever a new category emerged, I reanalyzed the data to see if the
category had been in a previous finding but overlooked. I also took field notes that I constantly analyzed and compared to the data already collected. This cyclical process of data collection, reduction, and reanalysis was constant. Additionally, I kept a research journal to record all my thoughts, ideas, and questions.

When I began this study, I had already decided that what I was documenting was a genuine attempt on the part of the families to educate their children in the best way they knew. However, my interest in this phenomenon, with strong prior interests and ideas, never meant that I understood or was sympathetic with every goal or practice of every home school family.

There are always diverse and multiple goals and practices. Part of being able to describe what is happening is to expose these differences so that others can reflectively consider alternatives as the basis for planning. No one agrees on all points, in any venture of life. My participation in this study permitted me to examine and extend the interests and ideas I came with as well as to observe and record those other people brought.

The following chapter will present the parents' descriptions of the events leading up to their decision to home school, and their first and second year experiences regarding family adjustments, curriculum choice, and implementation. The chapter will conclude with a description of what their home schools look like now, family relationships, the role of the parent/teachers, current motivations to continue home education, and parental goals for the future.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter will reveal the goals, perceptions, and patterns of curricular implementation in home school families from the perspective of the parents. This study is unique because no study could be found that has explored how families have adjusted over time to this new life style. There are two basic groups that exist: families that begin home schooling their children from Kindergarten or first grade, and families that have removed their children from public or private schooling after an extended period of time.

Even though the first group does not experience the adjustment transition of ‘bringing the children home’ both groups experience shifts in goals and implementation as ‘school’ becomes front and center of their lives. Of the seventeen families represented in this study, seven families began to home school beginning with Kindergarten or first grade and the remaining ten families pulled their children out of school after attending for an extended period of time. The families in this study that home schooled from the beginning wanted to home school; the families that pulled their children out did not ‘want’ to home school and only saw it as an option when they believed all other doors had closed. Each of these families had either
social or academic concerns that they did not believe could be addressed satisfactorily at school.

The Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1) Why did parents decide to home educate initially?
2) What curriculum did they use at the beginning and how did that change over time?
3) What was the first year of home schooling like?
4) What changes occurred during the second year of home schooling?
5) What changes occurred during the third year?
6) What were the current perceptions of the home school parents regarding home education?
7) What does each family's home school look like now?

Purpose of Study

The reasons families originally began to home school varied greatly, but fell basically into five main areas. As parents continued their journey, however, their goals and motivations changed, as well as the way they implemented the curriculum. This study describes in a year by year analysis how this change occurred in seventeen families and explains the patterns that emerged in spite of the great diversity within the study group itself.
The Decision to Home Educate

The families represented in this study have decided to home school for many different reasons. Their motives fall broadly into five categories: parental background, ideological worldview, academic, family relationships, and social concerns. Each of the categories has been identified in previous research.

Seven of the seventeen families, or 41 percent, made the decision to home educate either before their children were old enough to enter school or, in the case of one family, immediately following their daughter's Kindergarten year. In two of these families the personal backgrounds of the mothers drove the decision. Another family decided to home school for ideological reasons, and one family wanted to provide a richer Kindergarten experience for their child. Two of the families wanted to maintain closer family relationships and the seventh family believed that their son would not adapt easily to a classroom environment because of an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

The remaining ten families reluctantly decided to personally educate their children after experiencing academic and social situations in the regular school setting that they believed were only solvable by bringing their children home.

Parental Background

Two of the seventeen study families, or 12 percent, decided to home school because of the mothers' personal background experiences. Kathy Lincoln, who had been home schooling for nine years, said she wanted to spare her son a negative experience.
I never cared for school. I was an honor student but I didn’t like the atmosphere and I was bored. Initially I only wanted to home school my son for four years. I wanted John to have a good start without frustration or humiliation. I’d read several Holt books and he found that most kids were at different skill levels until the third or fourth grade.

Shari Blake’s reason was different. She said she had never had a meaningful relationship with her mother and she always regretted it. Home schooling her son, Jacob, provided an opportunity to have a special closeness with him for an extended period of time.

My mother was a very strict woman. She said, “Jump!” and we said, “How high?” I didn’t think she loved us or hated us. It was just the way it was. But I noticed that other kids had relationships with their mom’s. And I thought, “Golly, why can’t I have one with my mom?” And as the years went by, it was something I continued to long for.

Even though only two families in this study fell into the category of home schooling for personal background reasons, this is a category frequently mentioned in other research. These two examples show the diversity even within this small group.


Ideological Worldview

In a 1997 nationwide survey of 1,657 families Ray (1997) found that approximately 85 percent of the parents who home school claim to be born-again Christians. Denomination membership varied greatly with the five largest being Independent Fundamental (24 percent), Baptist (19 percent), Independent Charismatic (9 percent), Roman Catholic (5 percent), and Assembly of God (5 percent).

Fegley’s (1993) Connecticut study of 66 families reported that 23 percent of the parents stated that they were home schooling for ‘religious convictions.’ Mayberry’s (1988) state-wide Oregon study of 461 families found that 65 percent of the families in her study were home schooling for religious reasons.

Nancy Michaels remembers the moment she made the decision although she waited four years until her husband agreed before actually beginning.

I heard an evangelist who talked about the Biblical reasons God has called parents to be the primary teachers and trainers of their children. I can’t even remember the details, but I remember crying in my seat as I felt my heart break for my children. At that point, I wanted to home school. The secondary reason came as we watched our gifted children become more disenchanted with school and learning in general.
Maureen Murphy spoke of a direct call from God when her first born was still a baby.

One day I was just sitting there rocking her and I had this thought that Joyce would never go to school. I had never heard of home education but then I heard a Dr. Dobson broadcast [about home schooling]. When she was four I went to my first conference and I just knew that’s what I was going to do.

In spite of the fact that fifteen of the families, or 88 percent, professed strong religious affiliations, only two families, or 12 percent, say they decided to home school because of their ideological beliefs.

Academic Adjustments

Six of the families, or 35 percent, began home schooling as a response to academic concerns. This category represented the highest percentage in reasons family chose to home educate. One family simply wanted to give their child a ‘good start’ by home schooling in Kindergarten, but the remaining five had specific concerns relating to their children’s school experiences.

Evy Stein, who has three young children, began teaching her oldest, Christina, right from the beginning.

When I first started [to home school] it was for academic reasons, for the three R’s. Just getting them reading, writing, and
doing their arithmetic. We also thought their physical development and feeling emotionally secure was important too.

Three families had children that were not able to keep up in their classrooms. They only planned to home school until they had their children at grade level. Sandy Kenmore’s second grade daughter, Crystal, couldn’t read and working with her at night was too difficult.

Her teachers in Kindergarten and first grade kept telling me I had to work with her and I thought, “That’s your job.” I worked full time and my husband was in school and it was just a struggle to get home, get dinner, and get everybody to bed. I never had the patience anyway. When I’d work with her, which was hard to do after school because she has a very short attention span, she’d be fine the next day. But as soon as we’d skip a day, the teacher would call again. Crystal still didn’t know her alphabet. So I decided, what the heck, if I have to teach her myself I might as well just home school and do it during the day.

Linda Baldwin did not feel comfortable with what her daughter, Andrea, was retaining, and she and her husband, Don, were frustrated because they had no means by which they could measure her achievement.

We took our fifth grade daughter out because we wanted to be sure she was retaining the information she had learned. When we talked to the teacher, she’d say things were fine and that our daughter
would catch up. But they didn’t correct homework or give grades so there was no way to be sure.

Two families made the decision because they did not feel their children were being challenged sufficiently. Bonnie Kellogg had tried two private schools over a period of four years.

I had never considered home schooling until my daughter was in the third grade and I felt like my options were completely gone. I didn’t have any choice because there was no school that I felt would challenge her. We were opposed to home schooling because we thought it was a right-wing activity. I felt like it was an isolationist activity; that the only people who did it didn’t want their children taught things like evolution, which I have never veered from.

Sarah Jones’ son was attending public school but did not have sufficient accelerated activities available to him.

Our son had been tested as gifted but we had relatives that had experienced the gifted program and we knew that there was no point in waiting for 4th grade. So we were looking for better academics, but private schools were so expensive they weren’t an option.

Unlike the families from the first two categories of parental background and ideological worldview, only one family from the academic category actually ‘wanted’ to home school. The five ‘academically concerned’ families
home schooled because they were convinced that their children or their children's circumstances would not improve sufficiently to remedy the situation as it was. They each explored other options first, but finally decided that home schooling was the only viable option available to them.

**Family Relationships**

Two families, or 12 percent, cited closer family relationships as their reason to home school. Mary Brown shared that she had wanted to pursue a full time career and that their daughter, Julie, had attended Kindergarten. The Brown’s were very happy with Julie’s schooling experience. However, when Mary realized how little family time was available once her children went to school, she decided to reprioritize her life. She quit teaching and stayed home.

By the time my daughter got home from school, had some down time to play and unwind, we had dinner and baths and read some stories, it was bed time. We didn’t have any time to really hang out with her. I saw this as the beginning of losing my family.

Beth Ann Kelly told how she had raised her stepson “in daycare” years before and had since regretted the time lost with him now that he was grown.

I was watching these other families that were home schooling, and they were closer to their family members. They were always together and everybody was always helping each other. I wanted that for us.
Even though only two families reported family relationships as the primary reason for home schooling at the beginning, after three years all of the families said that this area was “extremely important.”

Social Concerns

There were five families, or 29 percent, that said they home schooled for social reasons. This was the second largest category out of the five that emerged in this study. Four of the families had children who were nearing middle school and parents had concerns about their child’s social adjustment or peer relationships. Sandy Kenmore, who had originally decided to home school her second daughter because of reading problems, related this about her oldest, whom she was not planning to home school:

Patricia begged me to let her come home too. She was constantly made fun of because she didn’t have the nicest clothes. She didn’t fit in with the crowd. She was a good student, but we weren’t wealthy and I don’t shop for all the newest styles.

Lisa Sommer, an elementary school teacher herself, said she and her husband began looking for alternatives for their oldest son, Garret, when he was in fifth grade.

He had been in the gifted and talented program at school and he was hanging around with a group that started getting a little rowdy. We saw that Garret was being influenced by them too much and he
wasn’t a straight A student any more. Then we had a few little incidents at school that we weren’t pleased about. We were afraid that it would just get worse.

Three of the ‘academic’ families had children with special learning needs and none of the children were functioning well on a day to day basis. Abby Currier’s son was hyperactive and also had some severe vision problems that were affecting his development. She explained:

We started home schooling Justin just after he turned four. He was sort of invited to leave one preschool, and definitely invited to not return to another the following year. We knew it was going to take some very specialized and time consuming handling until we could get him functioning comfortably.

Janet Roman decided to home school because her oldest daughter, Jill, had some severe learning disabilities and was having a difficult time with peers.

She came home in tears almost every day. I could literally expect her to walk through the front door with tears streaming down her face. Kids threw her books in the bushes; kids called her retarded; kids just did unbelievable things. They made fun of her constantly.

The social reasons families decided to home school were, perhaps, the most painful. Parents were confronted with situations that they were not
sure how to handle, and they did not feel equipped to adequately carry on with the academic responsibilities they were taking on. However, each felt that what their child was facing was too difficult or important to ignore, and none of them felt they could leave their children in circumstances that were potentially harmful, academically, emotionally, or socially.

Summary

There are many reasons why the parents in this study decided to home educate. Some goals and motivations were personal; some were connected to circumstances that made them feel helpless. All of the families planned to home educate for only a short period of time, but now, all of them say they will continue to home educate through high school. What happened to change these parents’ minds, especially when many were so reluctant to begin?

Year One

Learning to be a Family And a School

There were three areas that emerged as major concerns during the first year families home schooled. Family relationships had to be realigned, mothers had to take on the role of parent as teacher, and curriculum had to be selected and taught. It was a tumultuous, unnerving year for most of the families.
Family Adjustments

Family adjustments for both the children and the parents are a major issue the first year, though it is decidedly easier for the parents who are home schooling Kindergarten or first grade children. Many mothers reported high anxiety levels associated with having their children home all day and figuring out curriculum.

Several who had pulled their children from school spoke about having to reestablish parental authority. Having to teach their children to do chores and act responsibly with school assignments was sometimes difficult. In addition, six families, or 35 percent, reported unanticipated traumatic situations that radically altered the schedules of their home schools during that first year.

Mothers' biggest concerns. When parents first start to home school they struggle with feelings of inadequacy. Eleven of the mothers, or 65 percent, reported that they felt anxious about their ability to teach and worried about how this decision would ultimately effect their children. Nancy Michaels, who is in her fourth year of home educating, shared that this is still sometimes a worry.

My biggest concern then, and often still is, this imaginary fear of not doing things right enough. Poorly phrased, but an accurate description of the black cloud that wants to hang around if I'm not careful. Because Derek had a hard time learning to read, I was very concerned that something was wrong with him that I didn't understand.
Janet Roman was worried about “ruining” her children and what their feelings toward her would be someday when they looked back on this experience.

High, high anxiety and I’m not talking about just common anticipatory anxiety that we all go through when we start something new. I’m talking, “Am I ruining my kids?” type of anxiety. Will my kids ever forgive me if I make a mistake? Will I ever forgive myself?

Shari Blade’s mother and in-laws, who were distraught over her decision to home educate her son, caused her many sleepless nights.

Well, everybody says you’re going to ruin your kid. And I think most of the times when I was sitting and crying about what a failure I was as a home school mom, that was the thought that kept coming to me. I was ruining him. But I didn’t know why I was ruining him. Just that, you compare your home school with the school you went to as a child. And you compare the classroom you had as a teacher, and then you look at your home school. None of them are the same. They are three totally different systems and yet you make them all out to be the same. You’re getting pressure from everybody and you’re just sure that you are ruining your kid.

Sandy Kenmore didn’t feel she had adequate background knowledge and worried that she wouldn’t know everything she needed in order to teach.
I am so impatient by nature. I couldn't sit still for two minutes. Trying to sit here and teach my kids was such a challenge because my education is very poor. I knew I couldn't do this. It was scary. I was so scared I couldn't make the decision until August 31st, the very last day.

Michelle Knight, who is a chemical engineer, worried that her children would fall behind.

My biggest concern was that I would not cut it, because I am not a teacher. That was the scariest part for me. I had taught catechism classes and Sunday School but this was very different.

Three of the families, or 18 percent, shared that they felt guilty admitting to themselves that having their children with them all day was not something they desired or enjoyed. Janet Roman admitted that just being with her children all day was difficult for her.

We had pulled my special needs daughter out because the [social] situation in school was so painful for her. But it was me that was struggling, not her. I wanted the best for my children, but I didn't enjoy them. I didn't work at encouraging relationships with them. I spent the entire first year learning to tolerate my children.
Sandy Kenmore's oldest daughter was her biggest challenge. Sandy wasn't sure if she'd be able to continue long enough to turn Patricia around. Many days she did not feel up to the task.

Patricia was only twelve but she was so strong willed, stronger than me. We couldn't stand to be in each other's sight for thirty minutes. And she knew how to manipulate me. She's smarter too, so I would let her have her way. But when we started to home school and I was there to follow through, I didn't know if we'd be able to make it or not. I didn't know if it was worth it; it was all so hard anyway. There were times when I wanted to shoot the kid. If it hadn't been for others encouraging me...

For Sarah Jones, however, it wasn't feelings of inadequacy or not wanting to be with her son, it was the socialization issue.

Believe it or not, I was most concerned that Stephen wouldn't have any socialization. He was an only child. We lived in the country. There are no human beings around here for him to play with and my biggest fear was that he would have no friends. I worried for the first six months that we were warping his personality.

Regardless of the amount of education mothers had, very few felt comfortable taking over the teaching responsibilities of the schools. They wrestled with their own feelings of inadequacy, their children's personalities,
and social worries. Many of these feelings subsided year two, and by year three, these concerns were nearly entirely gone.

Reestablishing parental authority. One of the issues frequently mentioned by parents who remove their children from school is the readjustment of roles and responsibilities. Of the ten families in the study that took their children out of school, half of them, or 50 percent, reported severe adjustment problems for both the parents and the children. Sandy Kenmore said that the 'living adjustment' was even more difficult that figuring out the curriculum.

We had to learn to live together and my kids were undisciplined and spoiled. I had worked [before we home schooled] and never said no to them. You can imagine we had a lot of clashes that first year. I didn't think we were ever going to get home schooling done. We were constantly working on bad attitudes or whining.

...sometimes it would take us three hours just to get chores done. They were so messy and had such bad attitudes. I had never taught them how to clean. I remember Crystal saying if she'd known I was going to make them do chores she would have stayed in school. Now it just takes 20-30 minutes max and I don't even have to supervise. They just do it.

Working with my middle schooler was the hardest. We would fight so much. She would say that she wanted me to work with her, but then she'd be totally unteachable. Just resistant to everything. And I would say, "I'm a failure at this, why don't you just go back to
school?” and she’d say, “No, Mom, please, please don’t send me back to school. We can work this out. Please.” And I would think to myself, this kid is going back to high school, let me tell you.

Lisa Baldwin talked about taking over the role of teacher in her children’s eyes. For her it was a struggle to get her children to believe that she ‘could be a teacher.’

Like any kids they were accustomed to taking their authority for schooling from another person. When I corrected Nicholas’ writing and told him he needed lower case letters, he’d say, “Well, my teacher says I don’t have to do that.” And it was the same with Andrea. They had this attitude that only the teacher could tell them what to do and I couldn’t because that wasn’t how they teach in school. There was a lot of that butting of heads and learning to do things a different way.

Reestablishing parental authority in the area of chores and teaching was often a momentous task. The support group leader, Sarah Jones, spoke of year number one being “the winnowing year.” Obviously, the parents in this study made it through and continued to keep their children at home, but those feelings of adjustment were still so poignant for the parents that they often had tears in their eyes as they related their memories of this first year.

Family relationships. This category was mentioned as the most rewarding part of the adjustment period by fourteen, or 82 percent, of the families. Mother’s developed strong relationships with their children, siblings
found playmates in each other, and self confidence began to bloom. Beth Ann Kelly said that she and Renee had a wonderful time exploring their community and spending time together.

We had fun. I was really getting into parks and nature, so we’d take our books and sit under the trees and do little activities. Sometimes we would go to the cabin or the zoo. She’d do a lot of writing in her little notebooks and at the same time learn these little phonics words. She would have school all day long any time and anywhere.

Michelle Knight soon realized that “the talking” was probably the most important part of their day, even when she didn’t feel that sufficient amounts of school work were being completed.

I had been concerned that once we started school we might talk too much. But I found out that was part of what we needed to do. It was the most important thing and I didn’t realize it at the time. We needed to get our relationships back together. That’s when I learned to watch a lot more closely to what was going on and I think that first year was what set the foundation for going ahead successfully the following year.

Sibling relationships was the thing that Janet Roman remembered about the first year. She had trouble personally adjusting to her four children
being home all day but when they started to interact positively with each other, she decided it was worth the work.

That first year my children changed. They were much better kids. They were more obedient and more considerate. We moved out into the country and they were stuck for awhile without playmates. They learned to love each other. They were different from when they went to school. That was quickly noticeable. Quickly. And I liked them a whole lot better when they weren't in school, when they were home at night instead of always having to be with friends.

In school my kids had been embarrassed of each other. I don't know how that happens but they did not even want to be associated with each other. Now they are crazy about each other. I noticed all those changes almost immediately. And that encouraged me tremendously.

Sandy Kenmore saw a huge change in her daughter's self confidence and in her relationships with other people. She credits Patricia's experience as a volunteer for much of the reversal.

Patricia volunteered at the science museum one day a week. At the beginning her evaluations would say, 'Uncooperative, won't follow a schedule, will not come on time.' But by the year's end she was getting rave reviews. She began to blossom with self confidence. She could give speeches. She earned stars. She's a perfectionist
and I think she was very insecure and extremely timid. Volunteering was valuable for learning science and for interpersonal skills.

Parents drew much encouragement over the year as they saw other areas of their families' lives enhanced by the extra time and opportunities that were now available with their children home. They reveled in the new relationships that were forming and spoke of feeling like a 'family' again.

**Establishing a routine.** The first year was one of new beginnings. Nine of the ten families that had taken their children out of school, or 90 percent, said they had to alter their lives significantly now that their children were suddenly home all day. Parents had to learn to be organized and on a schedule that included school work. Children learned to take responsibility for some of the meals and getting their assignments and chores done. Janet Roman said that the hardest thing for her was the personal discipline of being consistent every day.

More than anything that first year I struggled with personal discipline. That meant getting up, establishing a routine, not laying in bed too long. I didn't know how to establish any kind of structure.

Michelle Knight found that stopping to prepare lunch for everyone was too disruptive. It was better if everyone took care of their own and just kept working. They also realized quickly that some work could be done 'off premises.'
We always tried to get everything done in the morning, but it never seemed to work out that way. We learned to be on our own for lunch because sometimes I found myself spending an hour doing lunch and then we would never get back. We were with a correspondence school that year and we had so much to get through. But we just kind of flowed. We learned what worked best, whether it was sitting on a chair in your room or curled up on the couch. And we just kept at it. We started the year off very regimented. But then we learned that we could be flexible. We did a lot of school work while riding in the car.

I also learned how to get the child to do what you want him to do. And part of that meant learning how to push; how to get them to think correctly. Setting goals. Jane needed me to sit down with her and basically say, "Here's what you have to do. Here's how to get it done." It was helping her learn the responsibility of doing it for herself. They have to be the ones to do the work. You can't be on top of them all the time.

Sandy Kenmore tried to find a schedule that worked for them, but with three daughters and an age range of five to twelve and several different needs it was difficult to be very regimented.

We had a routine, but we were constantly changing and in flux because we were learning and changing and growing.
Nancy Michaels remembers how difficult it was to teach her five year old with younger children around.

We would sit for an hour or so in the morning and work on reading, phonics, letters, some general social studies, science stuff. But I found out real quick that I could not sit with Derek in the afternoon because he would freak out. We were frequently interrupted by the baby and it seemed like we were working for long periods of time.

As with all new enterprises, new rules had to be tried and new systems invented. Mothers had to figure out how to get all their domestic responsibilities done as well as all the academic ones. For many of them, sharing household duties and teaching the children to do school work independently became a priority. It was an adjustment getting used to the freedom and flexibility home schooling affords.

Family disruption. For some of the families it turned out to be a year of emotional turmoil. Six of the families in this study, or 35 percent, had to deal with very difficult circumstances and adapt their home school schedules in unconventional ways. Shari Blade felt overwhelmed by the many demands that she had not anticipated.

I felt so many pressures that first year. We had enrolled in a satellite school but the curriculum was impossible. Then we found out Jacob had some vision problems. My mother kept telling me I was going to ruin my son, and my in-laws were telling me constantly that I
was nuts. I had quit work, and my husband said we needed money to feed ourselves and get the eye treatments. My dad had died when I was pregnant and I hadn't mourned for him yet and I was having such a bad time with this school thing. Everybody kept telling me I was crazy. It was so hard juggling all these emotional balls.

Janet Roman remembers so much sorrow amidst the confusion of bringing her three children home and also having to contend with a toddler.

That was a horrible year really struggling with academics and lack of organization. My best friend's little girl was diagnosed with cancer. We did hospital visits, made meals, and babysat for her older son. During that same time my father got brain cancer and we had to take care of him. That involved daily injections and regular trips to the hospital for chemotherapy and radiation. Finally he moved in with us and then died in November. I found out I was pregnant late that fall and ended up being in bed for two months after Christmas.

Mary Brown was enjoying not working and being home until her father got ill and she had to drive her mom to the hospital every day.

We started out great. We did a fairly structured thing every morning until my dad got sick in November. He was admitted to the hospital and died in February. He was in intensive care and put on a ventilator. After three months my mom took him off. So school was basically reading books in the waiting room. We could visit for half an
hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon. Then I would take the kids home and drive my mom back to the hospital in the evening.

In spite of uncontrollable circumstances, these parents said it never occurred to them to send their children back to school. They agreed that allowing their children to participate in and watch these events unfold naturally made their families closer and gave them opportunities to discuss what was happening in a candid and timely manner. As Janet Roman said, “That’s life. We all learned a lot.”

Curriculum Selection

There was a wide variety of curriculums purchased, borrowed, and bought the first year families home schooled. Parents were overwhelmed at the choices they had and many just asked friends to advise them. Of the seventeen families in the study, four, or 24 percent, enrolled their children in long distance correspondence schools and two families, representing another 12 percent of the study families, enrolled in a local satellite program. Both arrangements prescribe the curriculum and monitor the children’s progress throughout the year.

The correspondence schools usually offer a pretest in the areas of math, reading, social studies, science, and grammar, and then send books they think will match the child’s ability level. Parents are responsible for returning the children’s finished work for grading. Beth Ann Kelly enrolled Renee at Christian Liberty Academy in Chicago for Kindergarten.
We enrolled in a correspondence school and used the books they suggested. I had to send in at least 75% of the work. They did the grading and sent us a report card. It was expensive, around $200 for the year. We did payments.

Sandy Kenmore did not make the decision to home school until late August so she had to find out what was available and affordable for three children. She finally decided on a correspondence school because she was so overwhelmed with the decision.

Since we didn’t make the decision until the last possible moment, I had no curriculum. I didn’t get any until October because I was trying to figure things out. I talked to the local support group leader, contacted the state organization, and got all the John Holt stuff which was non-textbook learning. Then I got the A Beka and Bob Jones catalogs and all the learning styles information. I was overwhelmed. Finally I decided on a correspondence school. They gave Patricia a placement test and then sent us all the materials, mostly A Beka textbooks.

Michelle Knight attended the state convention in June, and she was relieved she didn’t have to make any decisions.

The first year you get very overwhelmed just picking different things. I can remember that I had already decided on a
correspondence school when I went to the convention. It was scary looking at all that curriculum. You could buy so many things.

Sarah Jones, who had decided to home school because her son needed to be challenged more, found out quickly that there was a big difference using materials meant for a classroom and teaching one-on-one.

We used a correspondence school which I called ‘School in a Box.’ It came with a fantastic teacher’s manual and practically tells you when to breathe. You’re supposed to do an hour for every subject. I even scheduled in a 15 minute recess. But the problem was we forgot to look at the schedule and we finished his math in 20 minutes. We ended up throwing the schedule out the first week. They were allocating five hours for something we took half the time to do. They provided everything including the pencils. It cost something like $350 at the time.

In local satellite schools children are given grade level materials and the family returns to the school each month to meet with a teacher. She checks the child’s written work and questions him over what he has learned. Shari Blade was nervous about ‘going it alone’ and enrolled in a satellite program to appease the grandparents. Almost immediately, however, she regretted the decision.

We went through the satellite program because of pressure from my family. I wish I hadn’t done it now. They gave us all this
curriculum for Kindergarten but to me it seemed like memorization. And it wasn't any fun. It would take us hours to get through it all and it didn't even seem to make any sense. For Social Studies I just took him down to City Hall and made a field trip out of it. We went to the Capital Building and the Governor's office.

Six families, or 35 percent, personally selected their curriculum by reading and researching home school journals and catalogs, attending conventions, and asking other parents for advice and guidance. Some families tried a few different curriculums, including one that was advertised on the radio. Evy Stein, who had three children five and under, decided to use a unit studies approach in addition to math and a phonics program.

Since I started out with one daughter in Kindergarten and two preschoolers we weren't very structured. I had a math curriculum for the Kindergarten level. Then I got the Sing, Spell, Read and Write but I didn't like it. I also bought a unit studies program. We did whatever topics in it the kids were interested in and we loved it.

Bonnie Kellogg was interested in using materials similar to those used in the public schools. However, the schools would not give her any books to use, so she found what she could in local libraries and then ordered others from the publishers by sending them a copy of her teaching certificate. She was also very interested in using a whole language approach to teach reading and in doing lots of hands on activities.
I talked with friends and got catalogs from book fairs. I went to the home schooling convention and just looked at materials. I became familiar with the whole language concept and asked a lot of questions. The library also had textbooks and I got curriculums that the city schools were using. Then I looked at the curriculums that several different area schools were using and picked the texts I liked the best.

We would read for Language Arts. Then we would rewrite the book and illustrate it. The girls wrote the most beautiful books you could ever imagine, putting their writing and reading skills together. We also wrote about science and about literature. The main reinforcement was art. We did resist art and bead art. We did acrylic painting and sewing.

Lisa Sommer, an elementary school teacher, decided to make it easy the first year and ordered from a reputable curriculum company.

We started out traditionally. I bought the whole Bob Jones textbook program out of the catalog except for the math. I got that from Saxon.

Five families, or 29 percent, opted not to use any specific curriculum at all. These families provided their children with a vast array of library books, did hands-on activities, and used borrowed materials from friends and relatives.
Mary Brown wanted to keep the learning fun and relaxed.

Julie was only six that year so we just did a lot of library books and some math. We built a sort of solar system. We had it on a two dimensional scale and hung it from the rafters in our unfinished family room. We did a unit on bears and a lot of art.

Linda Baldwin enjoyed finding different materials for Andrea and Nicholas. They found books on topics that interested them and frequented the library and garage sales.

Our curriculum was very eclectic that year. I had no set curriculum because I don’t like textbooks. We tried to find different things. I found workbooks or textbooks that were written before 1965. We used library books. We did a lot of historical fiction and biographies.

Deciding which curriculum to use the first year was an overwhelming task for most families. No one, it seemed, was very happy with their selection. For the Kindergarten and first grade parents there were questions about phonics vs. whole language, writing, and unit studies. For parents who had pulled their children out, it was difficult to match new curriculums to the ones the children had been using and it was even more confusing to figure out what the children knew and what they didn’t know. Several parents felt they spent a lot of curriculum money unwisely that first year.
Implementation. Fifteen of the families in this study, 88 percent, stated that they had difficulty teaching their children because they did not know what level their children were functioning at or what their children already knew.

Sandy Kenmore was emphatic when describing how her children learn best and disappointed when she described their progress the first year.

My children learn best when they learn it on their own. The kids liked the activities I planned for them the first year but they didn't want to read the books I picked out. I would work and work to try to pull everything together and then they really just didn't care. And I would think, we have to get back to reading, writing, and math. My kids need the basics. So we stopped that unit/activity program some time during the first year.

We worked on this little table here for several hours a day. We would do our sounds and then I'd read with each one. Boy, was that a challenge. They couldn't do library books because they were too hard but I did find a set of early readers that worked pretty well. We had two different math programs; I did what people told me worked for them. We absolutely hated both of them. Then we went to a simple math and did that for half the year. But I was still trying to learn to discipline my children, and I just didn't want to fight over curriculum too. I didn't feel like we made much progress academically.

Shari Blade tried to make up for the uninteresting textbooks from the satellite school and worked hard to create a fun Kindergarten for Jacob.
I didn't know anything about learning styles but I knew he was a hands on kid. So I did everything hands on. And it wasn't until a professional educator told me I had to get him into books that I made a change. I wish I hadn't listened to him. Because the fun of learning went right out the window and I don't think it came back for a long time.

Michelle Knight thought she was all set with the program she had purchased but soon discovered that the books were much too hard for her son.

We started out with materials from a correspondence school. I thought Dustin was at grade level but soon realized I was totally wrong. We had to start over because he was two years behind. He couldn't do hardly anything without help. We had a lot of remediation that year with both the younger ones.

Besides selecting from a vast array of materials, parents have to learn how to use the materials and how to work most effectively with their children. This is an area of great frustration even for parents who have teaching backgrounds.

**Summary**

Planning a program for the first year of home schooling was a difficult and overwhelming task, especially for parents who removed their children from school. Being unfamiliar with curriculums and with their children's abilities, it was frustrating to find a good match between child and text. Even
for families who decided to work with correspondence or satellite schools, there was still a great deal of adjustment in setting up new schedules and assimilating their children back into a family life style. Children had to reestablish relationships with their siblings and learn to respond to their parents as authority figures who could instruct. This was a very stressful year for parents in the areas of reestablishing family relationships and routines, selecting curriculum, and learning parent/teacher roles.
Year Two
Becoming a Community of Learners

By the second year parents are describing closer family relationships. Children have adjusted to their parents as teachers, they are getting along better with siblings, and helping more with household chores. The family is becoming a community that works and plays together. Parents are less anxious about the commitment to home schooling and schedules are more predictable. Mothers are becoming more comfortable with their role as teacher and thinking more selectively about curriculum and what their children need to learn. They are also beginning to reach out into the community for resources, support, and friendships.

Family as a Community of Learners

Evident from their comments is the growing appreciation of learning and growing together, both from an academic standpoint and a nurturing one. Being together 24 hours a day creates an environment of openness and involvement in everything that goes on in everyone’s lives every day.

Twelve mothers, or 71 percent, referred to the fact that they started thinking more about their families as a cooperative unit, not only for learning, but for having fun as well. As far as curriculum is concerned, instead of each child having separate books for each subject, moms are making an effort to do more group activities and combine some topics.
Beth Ann Kelly and her husband own a trucking business that dispatches out of their home. The three of them, Mom, Dad, and Renee, each have a desk in the office and Renee works on her school work while her parents direct the drivers.

My daughter is closer to us than her friends are to their parents. She sees what Mom and Dad are going through, good and bad, because you don't have a choice. She's here all day long and a lot of times it's hard to shelter her. We have a business here so she sees everything that goes on.

In spite of the chaos of their first year with illness, Janet Roman says that her children were happy being at home and being together.

My children learned to love being at home. They loved the flexibility. And when they weren't cooperating in some way I would say, "I'm sending you back," and they would shape up. It always, always worked.

Evy Stein said that mornings were a special time. Her three little ones were always eager to begin. Then, in the afternoons, they did special activities.

The first thing in the morning we all sat on the couch together to read. Our unit was on courage and the Revolutionary War so we
would just read it through chapter by chapter. They would be quiet and attentive and willing to sit, so we would do that first thing before breakfast.

The second year I also got these two Spanish books for Christine and I and we memorized the dialogue together in the afternoons. We would listen on a tape and then say the lesson. Because she's so auditory this was a great way for her to learn. We really had fun together.

For the Knight family, the children got a chance to do something special with Dad. Soccer became a 'family affair.'

My husband was a certified soccer coach and both kids wanted to take the test for regulation coaching. They took the two week course and passed with flying colors. Now we have three coaches in the family. They had our family do the intermediate tournament that summer.

The second year the Knight family's academic schedule was different too. They had dropped their affiliation with the correspondence school and were taking time for things like reading aloud and art. Michelle Knight relates:

I would sit and read to them in the afternoons and the girls would either quilt or color. Dustin would paint or draw. We would read
good novels or sometimes I would read Jane’s history or science book out loud.

The second year the parents as well as the children seem more content, less hurried, and more comfortable being together. Children know better what is expected of them, and parents appreciate having their children’s undivided attention during the school day.

Curriculum Adjustments

As families become accustomed to having their children home all day, parental attention and concern turns from questions of “Can I do this?” to “What is it we really need to concentrate on?” Eighty two percent, or fourteen of the mothers, specifically discussed changing their curriculum to bring it more in line with their children’s specific academic needs and learning styles. None of the families that had begun with correspondence or satellite schools continued to do so the second year and even when they kept some of the same texts, they used them in a much different way. Janet Roman said:

By the end of that first year you begin to learn about your children, inside and out. I knew my children’s weaknesses as well as their strengths. In fact, I knew their weaknesses better than their strengths.

Lisa Sommer said that the best part of home educating was that one could individually select curriculum based on exactly what their children
enjoyed and what they needed to learn. By the second year, she could really start to individualize selections.

Trying to gear their education toward individual interests and abilities has been one of the things really primary in home education. It’s so terrific for kids when one is technically minded and likes math and the other one likes the arts and is very creative. And when you see weaknesses you can work to develop those areas more faithfully and consistently.

**Individualized instruction.** Meeting individual needs is the curricular theme of year number two. Explicit teaching that is sensitive to particular areas of weakness and to learning styles characterized these home schools during this time. Abby Currier, who had kept her five year old son, Justin, out of school because of his vision and developmental problems, bemoaned the fact that she couldn’t use curriculum from her older child, even from Kindergarten or first grade.

All the things I had saved from my first son’s schooling looked like it would be totally useless with Justin. I never realized how uniquely different children could be. We did lots of reading and went to the library often. It was very difficult to hold his attention. The slightest little thing would distract him and it was so hard to recapture his attention. I learned to practically not answer the phone at all.
Michelle Knight kept some of the same books that the correspondence school had recommended, but she dropped the correspondence school and added some interesting extracurricular activities.

The second year I decided not to go with the correspondence school because I wanted more freedom to pick and choose. I found I was doing a lot more on my own anyway and I wanted to choose more of the science, especially. I used some of the same books, but I used them much differently. That year I continued my gradual increasing of Dustin's work load. We started doing almost all A Beka and I began adding extras for science and history that were more interesting. We increased our involvement in field trips and extracurricular activities also.

With Jane, because she hadn't been as far behind as the other two, we decided to skip eighth grade because she had made so much progress the year before and it looked like it was all review anyway. She'd already done Algebra 1/2 and I wanted her to have General Science and Biology. She had made enormous strides in English too.

Sarah Jones, who had also had her son enrolled in a correspondence school, said it was such a relief not to be tied into someone else's idea of what ought to be done and when. Her son, Stephen, particularly enjoys learning when he can listen to tapes or be on his own with a good book.
By the time the first year was over we were both chaffing at the restrictions we had with the correspondence school. So, basically, we reinvented everything because I read a book that told about teaching without using textbooks. It was just mind boggling. Using real books and no worksheets just opened my eyes to things that I'd never thought about before.

He hated historical fiction. He didn't want anything that wasn't true. Don't embellish the facts. This is the child that reads encyclopedia's for fun. We also discovered Usborne Books. We still bought textbooks but we didn't use them the way they were supposed to be used. He also loves tapes. We have done more school in the car, which is a big joke among home schoolers, because we plug the tapes in and listen to lectures. He loves them.

Lisa Sommer says that home schooling gives her an opportunity to adapt curriculum to the specific learning styles of her sons.

I felt that children learned best in an environment where there was a lot of caring and freedom. Garret was somewhat of a doer but he's also very visual in that he can read and remember very well. But as a child he needed the hands on and tactile kinds of things.

I learned a lot having them home, especially about my second son, Luke. Because of his artistic bent he sees things differently, from an aesthetic point of view. I'm still learning how to best channel that so he can excel because he is not going to be the academic intellectual
type. He still needs to do college prep but it'll be more of a push to get him through and keep it interesting.

Beth Ann Kelly had also used a correspondence school the first year. She made some adjustments because so much of it was the same.

The second year we still used many of the materials from the correspondence school but we didn't do everything or send the assignments in. There was so much review. I used more library books and we did a lot of wild animal and nature videos.

Mary Brown was teaching her number two child, George, how to read. When her daughter, Julie, had attended Kindergarten, they had used a whole language approach and Julie was reading by the time first grade started and the Brown's were home schooling. Mary's friends told her George 'needed' phonics, but Mary wasn't convinced.

That year I got some A Beka readers because everyone told me I needed to teach George phonics. But it was January and he still wasn't reading and he was starting to hate it. So I packed up all the books and said, "I'm going back to using library books and having fun with it." And he started reading in six weeks.

By year number two, mothers were exhibiting much more knowledge about their children and curriculum. They still were not sure they had all the
answers, but at least they did not feel quite so overwhelmed. They were even beginning to enjoy the freedom that came with not catching the bus in the morning.

Explicit teaching. Parents find that specific instruction takes much of their time during the second year because they concentrate on areas of weakness. Eighty two percent, or fourteen of the mothers, told how they had to work with their children on a regular, daily basis, in order to accomplish what needed to be done. Sandy Kenmore said that her daughter, Crystal, finally learned to read.

That year Crystal learned to read. She told me, "Mom, you’re teaching me how to read!" She read this one story at least ten times. And she’s loved reading ever since. It took two years and she was in third grade. It was a miracle.

Linda Baldwin said that spelling and automatic recall of math facts were their biggest challenges.

Andrea had a more difficult time with her spelling so we had to work on that. And those multiplication facts. They still weren’t quite quick enough for recall, even in the seventh grade. She knew them, but they just weren’t automatic so that was something we really worked on.
Michelle Knight said that letting Dustin get ahead in math without her checking it every day was a sure recipe for disaster.

I learned in the second year not to let him get farther than one lesson ahead because he couldn’t go back and figure out what he had done wrong. So I learned to check his work immediately and we’d go over it together.

With Jane, I remember that summer she told a neighbor she liked home schooling because her Mom could teach her the way she learned. I remember how excited she got when she finally started learning how to write essays. And then when we did the grammar she said, “Mom, this is all so easy!”

Shari Blade said that the year before in a satellite school had been horrible for her hands on son. All that phonetic ‘book learning’ had really made him dislike school.

We read library books until he was blue in the face. I tried to encourage him to read because he hated it. So we’d pick funny places to do it. We read in the bathtub. We sat out on the roof, which was fun the time I locked myself out the window. We read in our pajamas, on the bed, under the bed. We also played a bunch of games that year and did zillions of field trips.
Lisa Sommer said that even though Luke was becoming more independent, she always made herself available and often they would end up doing many assignments together.

Luke was always the one that wanted me around. I'd be doing something and he'd call to me about a math concept or a grammar assignment and we'd do it together. We still continued to do history and science together too. Usually we read it together and did the maps and all that sort of stuff.

Evy Stein saw her daughter, Christine, become more independent as the year continued. But her son, Peter, still needed a lot of direction.

We started in the morning with Peter's Alpha Phonics by reading a chapter together. Then I'd have him read it back to me. Then later we would do some writing. Then we would do his math. With my daughter I was pleased because at the beginning of the second year I would have to sit down and go over everything with her. But towards the end she could do a lot of it on her own.

Bonnie Kellogg was still working closely with her two oldest daughters. She noted that her oldest, Jessica, seemed to be more dependent on her than the second daughter who had only been in school for one year. Bonnie thinks it was because Jessica was in school longer and was more dependent on her teachers.
We did a unit on rocks. We checked out twenty to thirty books and read about the periods that rocks were formed and tests we could do with them. We acquired a collection of fifty or sixty specimens. We did gravity and displacement tests in water. We did scratch tests and hardness tests. We had a blast. Learning was beginning to be so much fun.

Children are still learning how to learn and often lack self-confidence in moving forward on their own. Mothers made significant changes in curriculum usage and implementation, often spending large amounts of time specifically working on a particular area with a particular child. They also combined teaching subjects such as science and history to two or three of their children at one time, often using more interesting books than texts.

**Extracurricular activities.** There are many more extracurricular activities mentioned the second year. Eighty eight percent, or fifteen of the mothers, spoke about adding extracurricular activities to their daily schedules once they got more organized. They enjoyed looking for opportunities to expand their childrens' interests and finding activities to supplement the children's school work. Nancy Michaels said they got too busy and had to give up some of the things they had started.

The two oldest had music lessons once a week, and the three oldest sang in the choir. Soccer was also in the evenings. We had activity days with a home school support group once a week when we would do things like painting or writing. But we had to cut back because we weren't getting our stuff at home done.
Mary Brown, who had a second grader and one in Kindergarten, said that a lot of her children's learning was the outside activities.

We went to the library nearly every week. We read biographies and a lot of historical fiction. They went with me to vote. We went to the historical museum and Great Seal State Park and the Hopewell Indian Mounds. Julie learned spelling, capitalization, and punctuation through her journals. I had a baby in January and Julie was present at the birth.

Bonnie Kellogg said that they grew to love home schooling because of all the opportunities it afforded them.

We went to art classes, the science museum, and field trips together. We loved going to historical sites on vacations or day long excursions. We loved the state parks.

Michelle Knight's family became more involved with sports activities. Because her children had extra time now that they weren't in school every day, they could pursue some exciting goals.

We did horseback riding, 4H, and soccer. We got two horses and the kids have earned so many blue ribbons. We went to the state fair and Jane received four out of four for showmanship that year.
Sarah Jones wasn’t nearly as worried about Stephen’s socialization opportunities by year number two. They were even participating in some academic group activities.

He made a lot of friends that year. We were still importing playmates and we did a special science unit with three of his friends on a regular basis. We went swimming every week at the YMCA and did activity days weekly with the support group.

Because their time is so much more flexible and the family is free to schedule appointments and do activities during the day, many opportunities that are not available while the children are in school are now possible. Mothers enjoyed taking their children places and families did many more things together.

Field trips and travel. Parents also think about things they can do with their children that will make the learning more real. Field trips or travel were mentioned by sixteen, or 94 percent, of the families.

Lisa Sommer talked about making her son’s history lessons more real.

It’s so much more interesting if you can study the people who are a part of history. For example, we found this wonderful book about World War II that had a mapped out route in Europe describing where Luke’s grandfather had been.
So we interviewed him and then made a diary of his grandfather's World War II experiences. Then we talked to our Ukrainian neighbor who escaped from the communists at the end of World War II. He had a story that gave us chills.

Bonnie Kellogg talked about several trips her family had taken together.

We went to Monticello. That was really fun. We went to Mammoth Cave and Kitty Hawk and the museum where the Wright Brothers had their airplanes in North Carolina.

Linda Baldwin took her children on a local trip with their support group.

My kids still remember the Whistle Factory from that year. The whistles were unique because the owner was switching from cork to rubber. He's the only person in the world that can make those kinds of whistles. That trip was a great opportunity to talk about owning your own small business and doing something fun for a living.

Mary Brown, who had been a science teacher, always made sure their vacations included a museum and some good books.

We always went to the summer workshops at the science museum and we did the summer reading program. Whenever we go
on vacations we always try to go to museums. We went to the
Indianapolis Children's Museum and the Indianapolis Zoo.

Shari Blade wistfully remembered a trip they had taken to her
homeland.

We went to Italy to visit relatives and travel. I watched him
change and bloom so much while we were there. Now we are
planning a trip to England and Stonehenge for the millennium.

Parents start seeking opportunities to expand their children's
knowledge base as well as to give them experiences to write about and
share. They take advantage of local museums and talk to interesting adults.
They begin to think about vacations that will further their children’s interests
in areas of study and learning truly becomes 'a family affair.'

**Summary**

During year number two parents are enjoying the closer family
relationships and concentrating on learning how to teach. They continue to
learn a lot about curriculum and concentrate on finding materials that are
best suited to meeting their children's needs and learning styles. It is a year
that is extremely time consuming academically because much explicit
instruction is often needed to catch children up when they have areas of
weakness. Parents also work on teaching their children how to take more
responsibility for their assignments. Parents try to find interesting activities
and resources that will encourage their children and make learning fun by
reaching out into their communities.
Year Three and Beyond

Home Schooling as a Life Style

I've gotten accustomed to the whole life style of having my children home now and have accepted them as my friends. In fact, sometimes I feel lonely without them when they go off and do something.

Janet Roman, Parent

Year three is marked by another significant shift in outlook and operation. Family relationships are even stronger now and parents can hardly imagine a time when their children were not home. Curriculum is not as overwhelming and parents have found materials or methods that are working well. Children are often learning independently in some subjects and mothers are much more confident in assuming their role as teacher/decision maker. Parents are not instructing as much and see themselves more as facilitators. In short, the family is functioning as a unit and operating as a community.

By the third year fourteen families, or 82 percent, reported feeling much more comfortable with several different curriculums and with their child’s learning style. They know what their child can and cannot do on his own, and they know what he has learned. They know what environment is necessary for each child’s optimum learning. Parents often change their teaching emphasis year three. Instead of concentrating on the child’s weaknesses as they did in year two, they start thinking more about the child’s
strengths, interests, and natural bent’s. It is not unusual for children to spend large quantities of time developing special interests such as music, art, or drama.

Another noticeable shift is the increased number of commitments the family makes in the community at large. Eighty eight percent of the families in this study were active in support groups by this time and many of the mothers were contributing in some way to the operation of classes for several children, such as science, literature, or history study groups. Often the challenge from this point on is finding the balance between extracurricular activities and sufficient independent study time at home.

Parents have worked out a method for keeping records. In families where the children are older, the students are often checking at least some of their own work. Mothers are spending less time in actual one on one instruction and more time making curricular decisions and finding resources to supplement their children’s studies.

Responsive and Adjustable Environments

Parents in fifteen families, or 88 percent, report that by the third year they have acclimated to a life style that is dictated by the needs and preferences of the family. Weekly schedules are flexibly structured with blocks of time designated for particular activities and assignments. Daily schedules are determined by outside academic and social responsibilities including volunteer, apprenticeship, and employment commitments.
Daily Schedule

All of the families in the study say that they have a routine that characterizes their days. Most do their academic or textbook subjects in the morning and mothers stay nearby even when they are not actually instructing. Afternoons are generally used for group activities or set aside for special projects that are less structured or more interesting.

Veteran home schooler Lisa Sommer tries to plan a reasonable amount of work for each of her high schooler's and then stays available. Because her boys are older, however, they don't need (or want) her quite as much.

We've never been an early morning family. Everyone gets their own breakfast and we start our work around 9:00. They're old enough that they are very independent. Everyone gets his own lunch. Usually we work through the morning, sometimes they are at a desk in their room or in the living room. I'm available all day whenever they have a question or need some help.

I try to plan what they can accomplish in a day's time because I know it's concentrated. When you're home schooling they can sit down and work something through without interruption. We try not to do school in the evenings or on week-ends.

Evy Stein has three young children so she works more closely with them, especially in the morning when they do their academic work.
On a typical day our schedule is very open. Usually in the morning we try to get through the things that aren’t quite as much fun and that require a little more brain power. We save our art or unit activities like leaf hunting for the afternoon. My four year old takes turns playing with my son and daughter while the other one is working with me. Sometimes he just sits at the table with us and draws or plays with play dough or puzzles.

Routine. Sixteen families, or 94 percent, report that their children understand that they have certain academic responsibilities every day even though there is some flexibility. Parents try to make accommodation for idiosyncratic needs but expect the children to reciprocate by completing reasonable academic requirements daily. Carol Davis says her son moves slowly in the morning but he still has a schedule to keep.

Greg is a real slow mover in the morning. His body clock doesn’t kick in for about two hours so we don’t get started until about 9:00. We work hard all morning with the subjects we have to do together, then the afternoons are his. He has lots of art projects going all the time.

Sandy Kenmore is an early morning person so she gets her older girls moving and done by lunchtime.
We get up at 6:00 and start by 8:00 because mornings are our best time. We do chores; get breakfast. Everyone has their own schedule. I like to have all the school work done before lunch at 11:00. That frees us up in the afternoons to do other things.

Mary Brown has two younger children under five so they do the more detailed school work while the younger ones are sleeping in the afternoon.

Our mornings are real relaxed because we have two preschoolers. We get our bedrooms in order and have breakfast; then do some Spanish on the computer and just play. It’s good interaction time. Then when the little ones nap, I do school work with Julie and George.

Blocks of time. Besides being able to complete their school work in uninterrupted chunks of time, children often have time available in the afternoon to pursue interests or do special projects. Fifteen families, or 88 percent, say that their children use this time constructively doing things they enjoy.

Linda Baldwin says their whole day is comfortably paced; as they finish one activity they move on to the next.

I guess if anything we have changed from a public school approach to becoming, surprisingly, more unschooled. Although
we’re not what you would call unschooled. We work until we get our assignments done and then move on to something more fun.

Amy McLaughlin’s high school age daughter does her school work in the morning or in the evening. She spends her afternoons with her horse or working out.

Ellen either gets her school work done in the morning or after dinner. She has to take care of her horse every single day and it takes a lot of time. Horses are just like athletes. They need to work out on a regular schedule and it needs to be done properly. She grooms him, then saddles him and takes him for a physical work out. Then she has to bring him in and cool him down slowly. It’s real hard work, besides cleaning his stall.

In addition to caring for her horse, Ellen works out three afternoons a week strengthening her leg muscles. At the advanced levels of horseback riding she has to be able to ride the horse without stirrups. That means that her inside thighs are used to push her body out of the saddle at a trot. She can’t bounce but has to post. It is very difficult to do and hard work but she is determined.

Much of the Roman’s curriculum revolves around the children’s involvement with 4H. Sean and Stacy have each won numerous awards for their projects with animals, sewing, cooking, and rockets.
We do a lot of 4H projects. Stacy does sewing, cooking, goats, guinea pigs, and dogs. She's treasurer of the club and last year she got an outstanding at the State Fair for both the cotton jumper she sewed and the yeast breads she made. Sean did rabbits, cooking, and a rocket project. He got a superior for his rope entry.

Flexibility within structure is the key for Lisa Sommer. Her husband is the music minister at their church so her boys are often involved in drama’s and musical presentations. She works closely with her sons on scheduling to make sure everything gets done, even though they have times when they are completely ‘off’ schedule.

Home schooling has relieved so much stress because we don’t have these dictates that say our school work has to be done in a set time. I give them guidelines and we map it out carefully because they do need that structure in preparation for college. But if we are into night rehearsals or working on particular projects, we have the flexibility to adjust our schedules.

Sarah Jones says that her son is self-motivated and independent. He knows what needs to be completed in a week’s time, and he schedules his days according to what he wants or needs to accomplish.

Stephen likes to work in blocks of time. He knows what needs to be done each week and then he decides how he’s going to do it. Sometimes he’ll get one subject completely done in an afternoon.
For instance, he'll do three lessons of math just to get it out of the way. He can whip through three lessons of grammar in 45 minutes. If he's doing biology or history, he'll often read the whole chapter in one sitting.

Michelle Knight talks about where and how her son, Dustin, likes to work. It's not unusual to find him in some quiet spot getting his assignments done.

Often Dustin will pack his books and a blanket in his book bag, put on his safari cap, and turn the easel into a tent. He lays out all his work and pretends that he's sitting under the stars. He'll stay there all morning until he's done.

Relaxed atmosphere. For children, having time to respond to what is going on around them is an important added component to staying home. There's time now to look out the window and watch the birds or to have a picnic lunch on an especially nice day. Thirteen families, or 76 percent, report that they love having the freedom to be able to alter their schedule if something interesting or exciting occurs.

The children at Michelle Knight's home have been watching some ducks for several days now.

We have duck nests in our yard and part of each day is finding out what's happening with the ducks. We used to call the one duck the
mystery duck because the eggs would show up, but no duck. We were up to eight eggs, but no duck. We wondered who was putting eggs in the nest. And now we still can’t see because the grass has grown over.

The Roman family lives in the country and owns several animals. Their day starts early and requires energy and organization. The children use some of their animals as 4H projects and they work hard caring for them all year.

Life. The more natural the better. Our whole morning is spent with chores, caring for animals, life detail, basically. It’s the real life opportunities that turn into something practical, interesting, and meaningful. I’ve never found contrived activities terribly inspiring. I also believe that physical work is important to developing intelligence and emotional well-being. I think it contributes to character building. Getting the farm was a really good decision for our large family.

The McLaughlin’s have discovered that their son has a bent toward mechanical abilities and find that he is happiest “under a car.” Rather than restricting him, Amy and Jim have decided to capitalize on this interest by incorporating mechanics into his school day as a motivation and a reward. They also believe that allowing Seth the time and encouragement to pursue this interest could lead to a promising career.
Seth has the Honda running. He had to remove the gas tank and have it boiled out. He just finished putting the engine in; he was up at 5:00 am every morning waiting for his uncle to come and help him. The universal joint is going so we'll let him work on that too. Next on his list is my husband's old Nissan. It needs a new head gasket and Seth wants to work on that.

Linda Baldwin says she looks for many different ways to apply what the children are learning to real life. Even eating out and grocery shopping offer chances to learn.

Opportunities present themselves constantly. The other day we were at a restaurant and Andrea figured out the tip. She's really had trouble with decimals and percentages but now she's better at it than anyone. They have to compute the best prices at the grocery store too. It's not an educational format but it's what really sinks into their heads.

Mrs. Blade tells how she and her son love to go to the library and find materials to read and listen to, especially books on tape.

We go to the library at least three times a week. We go to different branches. Jacob's either listening or looking at something constantly. He loves books on tape. The last one we got was *The Last of the Mohicans*. It had twelve tapes and he listened to the whole thing!
By year three, daily schedules with structured time set aside for academics as well as selected special interest activities are routinely a part of the home school family’s day. Children are used to working in blocks of time and parents are busy, but they are excited and committed to what they have chosen to do. Their homes are warm and nurturing and characterized by a sense of purpose.

Relationships in the Community

Besides functioning as a unit within their homes, the families begin to look for opportunities to learn and serve within their neighborhoods and communities. Parents in 100 percent of the homes report that their children are socially active. They take classes, volunteer, and work outside the home. Parents believe that practical experience in the social realm is an important component to their children’s education at large.

Academic and social activities. Support groups are very important to many home schoolers and 88 percent, or fifteen of the families in this study, participate in a support group on a regular basis. Not only do support groups provide an opportunity for group interaction, they offer a format whereby the parents can pool their talents, interests, and abilities to offer educational opportunities for their children.

Linda Baldwin lists a variety of activities her children have done as a result of their support group participation and friendships. She wants this time to be more than just social.
Our support group activities are academic. Mothers share their abilities for two hours and the kids get academics. We’ve done art, newspaper, speech, debate, sign language, world geography, and recorders.

Last year we did an eight week study of the Civil War with five other families. We took tons of books out from the library, found things of interest, made notes, put together outlines that they could either write or speak from, and then went back to textbooks to put it all together.

When Andrea was in the sixth grade she got together with a high school student and some other kids and they dissected. There was no pressure. It was fun. We find people that have a strength or a similar interest and join them for a unit study.

Amy McLaughlin capitalizes on her animal menagerie for lessons in anatomy when it comes time to prepare the animals for the freezer.

We had a cow, a sheep, and some geese butchered. We saved the brains, tongues, lungs, and eyes. We had our support group over and they cut them open. It was a real hands on experience.

Shari Blade teaches a history class using good literature as the texts. Jacob also goes to a biology group with several friends once a week.

We’re in a literature group one afternoon a week. We’re doing the Revolutionary War and have found a great book by Joseph Martin.
called *The Yankee Doodle Boy.* It's an edited version of a soldier's diary. We also did *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the Civil War. Next we're doing *WW II* and reading *The Hiding Place* and a book about the lives of people at Hiroshima. He's also in a biology group on Tuesday nights that his friends' dad teaches.

Sarah Jones recalls a science class she did when she first started to home school Stephen. She especially enjoyed the group because Stephen was able to make new friends.

We did a science by mail program for two years with three other boys that we had been wanting to get to know better. The projects were really good. One time they had to build a straw bridge that would hold a certain amount of weight. We kept seeing how much it would hold until eventually it fell when we put four rolls of coins and all our lose change on it. It was great fun.

Even though there is great variation in the type of activities each family chooses to participate in and the amount of time each family spends in support group activities, the home school support group is an important segment of each family's home school experience.

**Volunteer opportunities.** By the time many of the children are in their teens, they are seeking activities to do in the community. Fifty three percent of the families talked about their children volunteering in their
neighborhoods, churches, or in the community on a regular basis. Parents, of course, see these occasions as yet another way to help their children learn and grow.

Mary Brown's oldest daughter helps a neighbor who needs a babysitter early in the morning. Since she has younger siblings, Julie is a natural for this job.

Julie babysits for our neighbor. He's a fire fighter and doesn't get off till 7:00 and his wife has to leave at 6:30. So rather than get the baby up, Julie goes across the street and watches the baby for an hour every morning.

When Amy McLaughlin's daughter, Ellen, volunteered at a local science museum, Amy said Ellen's people skills and her science knowledge increased dramatically.

Ellen volunteered at the science museum once a week for 18 months. She went from being a very shy child to very outgoing. She can ask people things or talk to a group. No problem with that now. Their training is just fantastic and the kids learn so much science too.

Lisa Sommer appreciates the variety of activities her son has been able to participate in at the science museum. Not only has he learned science and social skills, he has been able to work on their computers as well.
At the science museum Luke's been able to do all kinds of hands on things and the interaction with the general public and school children has been wonderful. He has learned how to perform all the shows that are in his area. Lately he's been auditing civic hours where he records the service hours of the volunteers on the computer.

Sarah Jones is thrilled with Stephen's experience downtown in the government buildings. She says she has seen a huge change in his ability to communicate with people.

Stephen started working at the Capital Building at the beginning of last year. They gave him several pamphlets all about Ohio History which he had to memorize and then take a test over. He was very shy when he first started leading the tours. Now he's a ham and I'm getting all kinds of compliments.

Some children have had the opportunity to participate in mission trips with church groups. Because their school schedule is so flexible, it is possible to take advantage of many activities even during the school year. In 29 percent of the study families children had, at some time, participated in at least one mission trip somewhere in the world.

Lisa Sommer's son was able to go to central America and to the nation's capital. Next year he wants to continue his travels.
Our oldest son, Garret, went to Mexico with a youth group and they built little box houses for the people. He's been to Washington D.C. and did a homeless project for a week. They went to food pantries and distributed food at a home for children and aging adults. This summer he's planning to go to Appalachia.

Parents discover that the more 'real' the activity, the more valuable the learning experience for their child. Since their children are not committed to attending public or private school every day they are available to travel and do unusual activities. Parents look for opportunities to link book knowledge with practical experience on a continual basis.

**Apprenticeships.** These opportunities are exciting for teens that have interests in particular areas. Sometimes they are short term events; other times the students use them as long term opportunities to develop marketable skills for future employment. In this study, 47 percent, or eight of the families, reported some affiliation with an apprenticeship program.

Ellen McLaughlin's interest in animals extends to activities other than her horse. She thinks she may want to be a veterinarian some day.

Ellen visits a veterinarian and has observed surgeries. It's a shadow program and she's also gone on several farm calls with the vet. Science is her favorite subject so doing that is a great compliment to what she's learning in the books.
Luke Sommer likes helping his dad at church and enjoys getting practical experience with the technical teams that help produce dramas at the church.

Luke likes technical things and he’s been able to apprentice at church with lighting and audio visual equipment. He helped install stage lighting and the electrical equipment with his dad and he has attended a sound seminar. Every Sunday he works with the sound technicians in the sound booth at church. He’s done special productions at Christmas and Easter and children’s musicals.

**Employment.** As the children grow older, some of the activities they participate in as students turn into work opportunities. Other times, because scheduling is not an issue, they are able to take jobs that might not have been available had they been tied to a normal school schedule. Nine families, or 53 percent, reported that their children either were or had been employed in some capacity either short or long term.

Sarah Jones said that all their time at the YMCA paid off because not only did Stephen learn to swim, he developed some marketable skills.

Stephen participated in ‘gym and swim’ days at the YMCA for years. He got his lifeguard badge last winter and they offered him a job in the afternoons teaching the preschoolers and elementary age home schoolers. Now he’s teaching swimming lessons there two days a week.
Shari Blade is pleased with how much Jacob has learned having a paper route. She makes him do all the connected activities completely on his own.

Jacob gets up at 5:00 to deliver papers. He's responsible for all the math and the phone calls that deal with the newspaper office. He has to deal with his own customers and make sure that his part of the bill is paid. The discipline is great because he has to go rain, sleet, or snow.

Parents believe that children glean much from social and academic activities outside the home. They often encourage them to volunteer, apprentice, or work in their communities and parents are proud of their children's accomplishments.

**Curriculum Implementation**

You know, you get to know your child. You start thinking about what matters most, about what it is she really needs. And you start to do things differently, instead of depending on the curriculum so much.

Beth Ann Kelly, Parent

There is a noticeable shift in both curricular selection and implementation year three. Because parents have learned so much about curriculum and become so much more knowledgeable about what their
children know and how they learn, parents are much more comfortable using textbooks and other materials in more creative and less demanding ways.

Parent as Facilitator

The most noticeable change of all during this year is the way parents teach their children. Fifteen of the families in this study, 88 percent, spoke of the increased independence of their children the longer they home schooled. As the children grow older, parents ‘facilitate’ more and ‘instruct’ less. Mothers continue to be available, but for the most part, the children know what their assignments are and understand how to complete them.

Bonnie Kellogg, who has home schooled for eight years, says that her approach to teaching has changed significantly over the years. Now that her girls are older, they can study on their own and just come to her when they have a question. She has also incorporated more user friendly texts and materials into their curriculum.

My teaching strategies really changed. I used to spend every minute of the day home schooling my kids. I literally taught from 9:00 to 5:00 and I still was not done. We had a good time but it was exhausting for me. Now they know if they have problems they can read the book and I don’t have to sit there every minute.

The preparation that I did when the children were younger was more significant than it is now because I had to prepare so many hands on activities. Now I do a lot of grading, especially the writing. Science still takes a lot of time.
I look for easy to understand books that have great illustrations and are very high interest user friendly materials. That way they will learn more from them on their own.

We're also using the computer more now. We have CD's for French, biology, social studies, and typing. They do a lot of letter writing on the computer and use Card Shop Plus. We have a voice activated computer so we can use interactive programs. The girls are really good in French.

As they get older they become more self-directed. Jessica is almost entirely independent. She comes for questions when she misses things in algebra. She really teaches herself a lot. If the foundation is there, it's almost as though high school is easier once you make the course selections.

Linda Baldwin is in her fifth year of home schooling and her children read a lot on their own. They also combine the reading with field trips and report writing.

I do not have a strong hand in my kids learning other than with assignments. They read it and then we talk about it. They learn best when they can read at their own pace. We do an awful lot of our history on field trips and then come back and do reports. I think my daughter read 25 history books on her own last year.

Beth Ann Kelly's daughter is eight and they are in their fourth year of home schooling. They have used the same curriculum each year so Renee
is very familiar with the format and expectations of the texts. She spends about two hours every morning getting her assignments done.

When we first started home schooling I had to do a lot of explaining and coaxing, helping her to understand. But now she’s off on her own. If she’s having problems she’ll bring it to me, but she knows how much of everything she has to do and just does it. Then I correct it.

Michelle Knight says there has been a huge change in the way she works with her children in the four years since they started to home educate. Initially she had to be with her children nearly every minute, but now it’s much different.

By the third year my oldest was definitely on her own. The curriculum she used had self-tests and I would grade them. Then over the year I told her she could grade them and I just gave her the big test at the end. I still monitor them and get books from the library. I’ll check their work at the end of the day. But I have changed my thinking because I realized that I want them to learn how to learn themselves. I think that’s the biggest change in my personal philosophy.

Lisa Sommer’s son is self-motivated and prefers to work on his own. He has tutors for the more difficult college preparatory courses so her input is minimal other than just checking on his progress.
With my oldest it's just answering questions or checking up to be sure he's getting his work done. I check on his reading and make sure he understands everything. Garret is really a model homeschooler in a lot of ways. He's a real low key kid and I just map out what I expect him to do for the week and he does it. Not with a lot of interaction from me. He has tutors for Spanish, speech, and advanced math and he's real conscientious about getting everything done.

Parents see their teaching role change dramatically over a three to four year period. Not only do the children become older and more independent, parents are more knowledgeable about their childrens' capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. They know when they can allow them to work alone and when the children might need more help, and they monitor their time accordingly.

**Dialogue**

This was an area referred to by 59 percent, or ten of the parents, as they describe the time they spend on a daily basis. After home schooling for a while parents begin to realize how much of a role oral communication is playing in their everyday interactions with their children.

Linda Baldwin says that dialoguing is not only an important skill to be developed but it helps her determine whether the children have really learned what they have been assigned to read.
We talk when we're in the car and they tell us what they've read and studied and we discuss it. Conversation has just evolved from the force of our life since I'm not reading the science and history with them any more. We have to talk.

We also focus a lot on report writing and oral communication skills. They do a lot of oral presentations for their dad and me. If they can repeat what they've learned I feel like they have learned it.

Michelle Knight says that the conversations she has with her children have taken on a new importance now that they are home schooling. Not only do they discuss school work, they are getting to know each other better too.

A lot of dialogue makes a difference. I never realized how much our kids really learn from us and can learn from us. One day when we were on our way to the stable Jane asked me what it was like when I was seven years old. Now we talk about things like that all the time, especially when we are in the car.

Frequent conversations help parents figure out what their children are learning and thinking. Parents consciously use the time they spend with their children dialoguing about both academic and social issues. When families home school there is an increased opportunity for each to get to know the other better.
Interest Based Learning

Fifteen families, or 88 percent, reported basing many curriculum decisions on their child’s interests during and after the third year. Parents often make a conscious shift from concentrating on areas of weakness to areas of strength. They also start incorporating topics they are interested in personally because their children are home all the time and available.

The Davis family has recently purchased a new camera for their artistic son because he has expressed an interest in photography. Mr. Davis is the sponsor for the high school yearbook and he is excited about working with Greg in this area.

Greg has recently developed an interest in photography. He carries the camera with him everywhere and has taken some incredible shots even around the house and the yard. My husband bought a CD rom all about photography and the two of them will probably spend a lot of time this summer taking pictures together.

Sandy Kenmore, now in her fifth year of home schooling, finally gave up trying to be so structured and now allows her children to select nearly all their own materials. She is not always comfortable with this approach but says they do a huge amount of work and are definitely learning so she backs off as much as she can.
Well, since they only remember what they want to learn in the first place, if I make it interest based they do much better. I have struggled with this for five years. We've gone through a progression of curriculums and now, finally, this year we are totally interest based except for math. They pick out whatever they want to read. I know C.S. Lewis said to give them less subjects and more content. It's so hard for me to quit all the textbooks and I'm still trying to simplify, but they are definitely doing better and enjoying it more.

Janet Roman's son developed a year long interest in rocketry and took his project to the Ohio State Fair.

One year my oldest son became fascinated with rockets. He did this incredible project; he even learned how to calculate thrust. He read biographies of astronauts and learned about outer space and the planets. He won a $50 gift certificate at State.

The neat thing about home schooling is that you can go with something until you're sick and tired of it and you really incorporate and integrate that information. He knows so much about aviation and rocketry and it's because he worked on that project for so long. That really proved to me that if the children pick the topics, a lot more real learning occurs.

Janet Roman's daughter had a similar experience and Janet attributes the many hours Stacy had available to study and work as the defining reason why she did so well also.
Stacy won a nationwide geography contest sponsored by Delta Airlines. I know the reason she won it was not because she is so brilliant but because she lived it and breathed it for months. It was a project she was proud of and she knew that material. To this day she could tell you anything you’d want to know about Tokyo: the population, the police force, the culture. It’s because she studied it in depth, at the expense of studying other things superficially.

Luke Sommer decided he was interested in learning more about percussion, so he started teaching himself and practicing regularly. When the Sommer’s saw his commitment and heard his progress, they hired an instructor.

Luke took an interest in drums last summer and started teaching himself at church because we didn’t have a set here at the house. He was faithful about practicing so we started him on percussion lessons. He really loves playing.

Shari Blade’s teenage son is interested in art and has been enjoying classes through a nearby university correspondence course.

He’s been taking a correspondence art class through the University of Cincinnati. It’s an interactive year long course and deals with painting and drawing. It’s been excellent and has taught him many techniques that he didn’t think he could do.
Michelle Knight's son spends a lot of time reading about military airplanes and they incorporated his interest into a project for a state history competition. She was surprised and pleased that he did so well in the judging.

Last spring Dustin did a project on the history of military flight for Show Case, a state sponsored home schooling event, where all the kids can enter projects of their choice and be judged. He loves airplanes. He has all these little models. He made a runway on a big board, made a hanger, and made sure all his planes were identified correctly. He typed up a report and proofed it. The judges were impressed because he knew so much about his subject. He got a ribbon for it.

Parents soon realize that the children become more engaged and learn more from activities they find interesting. Rather than doing so much explicit or direct teaching, 'school' becomes more productive if the parents provide materials that are naturally interesting, user friendly, and easy enough they can be managed independently.

Love to Read

Another theme that was prominent after the first two years was a goal many parents had worked diligently to achieve - a love of reading. Nearly
all the families, 88 percent, described frequent visits to the library for free reading materials as well as supplemental books for science and history projects.

Linda Baldwin's high school age daughter, Andrea, is an avid reader. Linda says they sometimes have to restrict her reading because she wouldn't get all her school work completed.

Andrea will read at least two or three books a month. She likes to read them in just a few sittings so we have to limit her because she won't get anything else done.

Beth Ann Kelly is delighted with her eight year olds' enthusiasm for reading. She often finds her reading to friends and her pet.

I've noticed Renee loves to read. She's got a bunch of books that she reads before she goes to bed and she always reads to her dog and these two little neighbor kids. I've noticed she learns and remembers more through reading than anything.

Bonnie Kellogg has three daughters that love to read. The youngest is the one that surprises her the most. She says they all have piles of books next to their beds, though, and that the girls love the freedom to chose which books they'll read next.
So far this year my youngest, Amanda, has read *Jane Eyre*, *Heidi*, *Old Fashion Girl* and *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader."* She's only ten. All three of the girls always have their noses in more than one book. We make up a book list together at the beginning of the year and then they chose the ones that sound the most interesting.

Janet Roman, the parent who had the least structured program in the study, has her children spend hours with library books. She says they are all avid readers.

Every one of my kids has learned to love to read, even my learning disabled daughter. She can enjoy a book at her level. I think it has a lot to do with family attitude. We go to the library often and they all take out a stack. I know they read nearly all of them.

Sarah Jones says her son reads all kinds of books, but he especially enjoys mythology. She tries to keep up with his reading, but she says it is hopeless.

I can't keep Stephen away from books. He got on a mythology bent a couple years ago and he read stuff like *Jason and the Argonauts* and all kinds of books recommended for high school and college. Right now he's working on *The Third Reich*. He reads four or five books at a time and it drives me absolutely crazy. I wish I could read them all too.
Reading is an important activity for these home school families. As they home educate for longer periods of time, many come to use the library more and more as a source for curricular materials as well.

Record Keeping

All the families have some method of keeping records. As the children grow older they become increasingly more responsible for keeping their own records. In fourteen of the homes, 82 percent, parents said they either keep detailed records themselves or check the records their children are keeping on a regular basis.

Daily lesson plans. There is a great deal of variety in the way daily records are kept. Sometimes parents use weekly lesson plan assignment sheets that the children check off. Sometimes the parents simply have the children create the plans as they move through their assignments.

Linda Baldwin writes out the plans for her children on a daily basis. That way she can check their previous work at the same time.

We have a three ring assignment book. I sit down daily and simply go from what they did the day before to their assignments for today. At the same time I check over the work they did the day before so I know they understand what they are doing.
Bonnie Kellogg’s family was the one that most resembled a typical school. The girls simply moved from one lesson to the next consecutively through their textbooks so writing out daily lesson plans was not necessary.

I don’t write daily lesson plans but the girls have to keep a daily log of what they do in their daily planner. When they were little I used to give them a quarter when they were finished but now the work itself is a kind of motivator. We do all kinds of fun things when everyone finishes.

Lisa Sommer, who also has high school age children, does have the assignments written down ahead of time. She also uses a separate notebook to record extracurricular activities.

For record keeping I’ve just been using a notebook and we write down daily what we do. Garret checks it off. I write down the extra things like volunteering at the science museum, youth choir, hand bells, or a field trip. I keep all their work so that if someone would ever want to see it we have it. We’ve always had daily lesson plans but it’s in blocks of time, not hours or minutes.

Shari Blade, whose son is fifteen, says Jacob likes to work on his own. He feels more independent and he can work at his own pace.
I make a daily list of everything that needs done, including chores like laundry, mowing, and sweeping. Then Jacob can choose the order he wants to do them in and just check it off.

Sarah Jones' son is sixteen and he also likes to work on his own. Since he has so many outside activities and commitments, and since he has been so responsible about his work in the past, she allows him a great deal of latitude in deciding when and how he will do his work.

Stephen is an extremely organized person. He has a great big notebook where he stores everything. He hates clutter. I have him bring it to me frequently and I scope through it. He understands the guidelines I have set and he does it all on his own. He grades his own work too.

There is a great deal of variety in the way parents oversee and supervise their children's work. Variables include the number of years parents have home educated, the age of the children, the type of curriculum the family has chosen to use, and even the number of siblings. All the parents expected their children to be accountable and help in the process in some way.

Assessment. There is also a great deal of variation in the way families do annual assessments. The state allows parents to choose between standardized testing or meeting with a certified teacher who examines the children's work. Sometimes parents keep portfolios for each subject.
area; sometimes they keep tests. Sometimes parents do a combination, depending on the curriculum or method of instruction they are using.

Bonnie Kellogg, whose children use mostly textbooks, do all the tests at the end of the chapters and she keeps those as her records of completion.

My kids have a lot of tests, in every subject at some point. Math, spelling. I don’t give them grades but they always know where they stand. We usually do the standardized tests at the end of the year because I like to see how they score. They have always done well.

Linda Baldwin makes the assessment procedure a lot more personal. She requires her children to discuss and then organize all the projects from the year into a notebook that they save for posterity.

We save all the things we’ve done from the year in a special box and then make up a portfolio notebook in June. It’s a wonderful review. Before they can place anything in their scrap book, they have to tell me something about it. If they can’t recognize the play or the paper or give me any information they can’t put it in because it’s not a learned item. It’s a massive project that takes at least a week. Sometimes we show the notebook to an assessor; sometimes we take the standardized test.

Lisa Sommer has done a combination of record keeping and assessments over the years. She says it really depends on the curriculum
they are using. This year she has incorporated SAT preparation so it will be
different again.

They’re high schoolers so they grade most of their own work
unless they’re having trouble with something. For their unit studies I
do evaluations; for biology and grammar we do tests. We’re also
doing the SAT preparation this year. I have to assign grade values for
a transcript and I’ve just been figuring out how to do that. We’ve kept a
portfolio and we’ve done some standardized testing. I also purchased
a Princeton Review this year.

During the third year and beyond parents trust themselves more in
making decisions and are not nearly so intimidated by assumed curriculum
expectations. They are much more willing to adapt the curriculum to their
child, rather than trying to adapt the child to the curriculum. This is proven
by the wide variety of interest based materials they use within their home
schools and the variation in assessing their children's annual progress.

In addition, they have come to appreciate the role dialogue and
communication play in their children’s education. They see their teaching
role more as facilitator/coach, than instructor. However, this varies according
to the ages of the children and whether or not learning disabilities are
present.

Third and fourth year home schoolers are interested in a great variety
of topics and they are often serious about developing outside interests
because they have the time to do so. Parents are supportive and try to
provide community resources to supplement their children's learning.
Current Perceptions

We think that all of life is a learning experience. You’re always answering questions. There’s always something to talk about. It’s not just a mind set. It’s a way of life. I don’t think learning begins and ends in a book.

Amy McLaughlin, Parent

Parents are very reflective as they think about how much they themselves have changed since they made the decision to home school. They nearly always talk about how much they have learned about themselves, their children, curriculum, and life in general. They marvel at the fact that they no longer want to send their children back to school; those who had only intended to give their children ‘a good start’ cannot believe they were now talking about home schooling all the way through high school.

Parent as Partner

Parents are nearly unanimous in saying that the best part of the whole home schooling experience is that they have such meaningful relationships with their children. Eighty two percent, or fourteen of the families, said that this was a very important aspect of their schooling experience and several spoke fervently about it. The ones that are most vocal are those that brought their children home after they had attended a public or private school.
Sarah Jones told me that after talking to several people who do not have good relationships with their teenagers, she is particularly thankful for her relationship with her son. Her response typifies the sentiments of the others.

Your child becomes your best friend when you home school. You spend so much time together; you know each other so well. How many people can say that their teenager is their best friend?

Parental Learning

Parents are emphatic about how much they are learning as they work with their children. Fifty nine percent, or ten families, spoke of a new found love of learning as well as academic accomplishments and new found strengths.

Sandy Kenmore was excited and still rather incredulous that she has learned so much. She couldn’t help but brag a little.

I didn’t know a noun from a verb when we started. I didn’t know anything. When I first got my daughter’s seventh grade grammar book I cried. Now grammar’s my favorite subject. I love it. It’s like a puzzle and you put all the pieces together. I can write too, and I didn’t even know it. It just comes natural. I’m not a professional, but I can express my thoughts.

I could read but I didn’t like to. I didn’t know all those good books were out there. I had never heard of Laura Ingalls Wilder or 145
The Chronicles of Narnia. Right now I'm reading *Ben Hur* and a Tolstoy biography. I love George MacDonald and the A.W. Tozer books.

Lisa Sommer told me that she had been a good student in high school and now has a teaching degree, but it wasn't until she home schooled that she ever enjoyed history. She thinks the method has a lot to do with her newfound interest.

I have really come to love history since we've been home schooling. As a student myself I could have cared less. But the way we've learned it, with interesting books, unit studies, vacations, and excursions to historical sites, state parks, and recreation areas, has made such a difference for all of us. We've grown into this style of learning and I've discovered more of a love for learning in myself. I have more curiosity.

Maureen Murray had a very weak educational background and started really getting interested in 'school' as she taught her children. Now she wishes she could pursue a college education herself.

I really had to educate myself midstream. I have read so many books and magazines in the past four years about learning styles, education, and curriculum. All about what's successful and what other people have done. Now I wish I could go to school myself and be a teacher.
Parents often find a new love of learning personally as they work with their children. They bring a new enthusiasm to the children’s experience and find that in working with their children, they learn a lot themselves. They often talk about how creative they have become in trying to adapt materials to their children’s learning style and ability levels and they seem to enjoy the challenge of making learning exciting to their offspring.

Looking Ahead

Parents enjoy talking about their children’s futures and are excited to share some of the ideas their children have expressed. Looking to the future is a regular topic of discussion because once the decision is made to home school for high school, parents need to plan curriculum choices very carefully so that their children are prepared for future options.

Student goals. Children start early to articulate some of the career choices that sound interesting to them. Seventy one percent, or twelve parents, said that they have these discussions with their children regularly and that they try to help their children determine where they might feel most productive and happy.

Linda Baldwin told me that Andrea talks about what she wants to do often. They are doing a college preparatory course of study and seeking information about colleges currently.
Andrea really likes working with children. She's thought about early childhood education or being an elementary school teacher in the inner city. She's also talked about writing children's books.

Michelle Knight said that her children love horses so much she thinks they will try to incorporate their equestrian experiences into some kind of career.

We're reading this incredible book right now about a little boy who has spina bifida and his experiences with horses in an equine therapy program. Dustin has wavered between wanting to be an equine therapist and being a veterinarian. We talk a lot about what he'll do.

Parental goals. When parents talk about home schooling now, it is interesting to note that their initial goals and motivations for home schooling have changed significantly from when they first began. Ninety three percent of the parents in this study that did not start out home schooling for religious reasons now say that religious commitment and character development are the primary reasons they continue to home school (See Figure 4.1). Life has taken on a much different focus for these families, and parents say they are more concerned about spiritual growth than any other issue. Academics, however, was always very important.
Figure 4.1: Reasons Families Home School
Linda Baldwin, who started home schooling for academic reasons, says that strong character and religious commitment are primary to her now.

Our goals have changed from academic excellence to strong character based on Biblical values. We want both our children to be able to withstand the pressures of the world that come crashing down and to be strong and do what’s right.

Mary Brown, who has four children, still says learning must be fun and that family relationships are important, but religious commitment is at the top of her list now also.

I want learning to be fun. I would like my children to be prepared to enter college if they chose to do that. I want my girls to be independent. I want them all to be productive. But most of all, I want them to develop a sensitivity to God.

Shari Blade, who never intended to home school past second or third grade, decided to home school because she wanted her son’s experience to be different from what hers had been. Now she says her motivation to home school is different. She continues to home educate because she wants her teenage son to learn to be strong and willing to follow God’s leading in his life.

First of all, I want Jacob to be a godly man who seeks after God’s will for his life. I want him to be willing to go after it even though
some people might not understand. My goal for him is not so much what he learns in a book but that if he has a desire to learn something he'll know where to go look for it. He'll have the initiative, the self-confidence, and the know how to start the process to find the answers. He won't have to depend on us or his boss to learn what he needs or wants to learn.

Lisa Sommer explains that at first they wanted to protect their son from negative peer pressure in middle school. Their goals have changed, though, and now they think character development and spiritual commitment are even more important.

Initially our home schooling was a response to something our son needed. But now, after several years, we see the results and some of the rewards, and it has become more of a conviction. Now our primary goal is for him to develop Godly character.

Sarah Jones started home schooling because she wanted to provide a more stimulating academic environment for her son. Now, she, too, says her focus has changed.

When we started home schooling it was our last choice. We thought all home schoolers were fools and that no normal person would do it. It was too much work and it was too unusual. We did it to give our son a strong academic education because he was gifted and not getting enough new material in the classroom. But now we're
doing it to raise a godly man who will be well educated so he can serve wherever the Lord wants him to.

It was interesting to realize that the primary reason these parents continue to home school is for spiritual reasons. Hand in hand with this goal was their emphasis on close family relationships.

Parents Reflect

Our whole life is a schoolroom. I always look for teachable moments.

Abby Currier, Parent

When parents think about their lives today and compare it to the time before they started to home school, they describe how they have come to understand that all of life is learning and growing and changing.

Linda Baldwin says that she thinks about education in a very different way now than she did when she first began to home school.

I've learned a lot about just taking life one step at a time and trying to see something in everything we do that might be a teachable moment, instead of trying to sit down all the time and just do books. I used to think that all learning came from the text. Now I know that a lot of times the most important learning comes from life.

On curriculum. Parents have definite and strong ideas about curriculum once they have worked with different kinds and know their
children better. They have numerous suggestions, sometimes humorous, for new home schooling parents.

Shari Blade wishes she had started with her child's interests when she first began. She thinks it would have saved her a lot of frustration and been much more productive.

Whatever the child's interest is teach him through that. If he likes bugs, get books about bugs. Bugs in different countries, bugs in different sizes, bugs in different colors, how to draw a bug. Take him to the zoo and let him look at bugs. Ask him how many bugs does it take to make more bugs and how many bugs do you get from this many bugs. You can do all kinds of stuff. Start with the child's interest and go from there.

Sandy Kenmore, who is known among her support group friends for owning every curriculum ever made, laughed when she suggested switching curriculums if one wasn't a good match.

It's important to tailor your school to your child. If you start something and it's not working, change it. Something else will work better, I promise.

Every home school is different. There's no one right way to do it. What works for one family won't necessarily work for another. My family is unique and for me to try to force my children to do what someone else's children have done is totally unrealistic.
Linda Baldwin encourages parents to keep on growing, looking, reading, and experimenting. Everyone, she says, is different.

Every child is so special. You have to be willing to explore, try new things, read inspiring books. It’s worthwhile to keep exploring because there’s always something better around the corner. Something that will fit, especially when you have multiple kids.

**On relationships.** Spending extended time with their children and developing a close relationship on a daily basis is described as very important by 88 percent, or fifteen, of the mothers. Parents that had taken their children out of school were particularly emphatic about this point.

Linda Baldwin had taken her daughter out after sixth grade and she explains that there is sometimes an adjustment period at the beginning that doesn’t have anything to do with school.

It took us a while to adjust to each other. Home schooling is an entirely different environment. Relationships have to be reformed, remolded. Then you have to give them time to work. This is the hardest job I’ve ever done in my life. But the benefits are so indescribable, so beyond your understanding, that it’s hard to explain.
Wrapping It Up

Following is a brief summary of the characteristics of the study families for years one, two, and three according to the major themes that emerged.

Family Relationships

Year One

Nine of the ten families who pulled their children from school (90%) referred to the adjustment of establishing new family routines and five of these families (50%) said they had to reestablish parental authority before they could accomplish much academically. Fourteen of the families (82%) from the total group of seventeen said that the most rewarding outcome of the first year was that the family developed closer relationships between parent and child and between siblings (See Table 4.1). They believed this was a direct result of the increased interaction necessary when home schooling.

Year Two

Twelve families (71%) reported that they were beginning to feel like a cooperative unit in both school and extracurricular activities.

Year Three and Beyond

Sixteen families (94%) reported having regular family routines during the third year. Thirteen of the families (76%) mentioned structured but flexible daily schedules that were occasionally altered if something of significance occurred. Fifteen of the families (88%) said that their life styles were determined by the needs and preferences of the family, and by the third year sixteen of the families (94%) said that they were now home schooling for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Characteristics</th>
<th>Percent of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Difficulty of establishing new family routines</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent has to reestablish parental authority and learn duel role of parent/teacher</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most rewarding aspect is close family relationships</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family has become a cooperative unit for work and play</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Regular routine established</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structured but flexible family schedule</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Life Style&quot; dictated by needs and preferences of family</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to home school for ideological reasons</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Close family relationships extremely important</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Family Relationships
ideological reasons. Close family relationships were also mentioned by fifteen of the families (88%) as extremely important.

Curriculum

Year One

Six families (36%) in this study used a correspondence or satellite school the first year they home schooled. Six families (36%) selected materials from catalogs or bought them at conventions, and five families (29%) did not use any specific curriculum. Instead they used library books, hands on materials, or borrowed texts from friends or relatives (See Table 4.2).

Year Two

None of the families continued to use correspondence or satellite schools to supply curriculum materials the second year. Fourteen families (82%) changed and adapted curriculum to meet academic needs and accommodate the learning styles of their children.

Year Three and Beyond

Fourteen families (82%) reported being more comfortable with curriculum and their children's learning styles during the third year. Fifteen families (88%) said that their children love to read and that they used their free time constructively doing things they enjoy. Ten of the families (59%) mentioned parental learning as an important and exciting component to the feelings of success in home schooling.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Characteristics</th>
<th>Percent of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Used correspondence or satellite school</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected materials from catalogs</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library books, borrowed materials</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Used correspondence or satellite school</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changed and adapted materials</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More comfortable with materials and learning styles of children</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children love to read</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children use free time constructively</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental learning important and exciting</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Curriculum Change Over Time
Curriculum Implementation and Parental Role

Year One

Eleven families (65%) reported feeling anxious about their ability to teach and struggled to adapt to their new role as parent and teacher. Fifteen mothers (88%) found implementation of curriculum to be extremely difficult. Six of the families (35%) experienced unexpected emotionally upsetting situations such as the death of a child or parent which effected their curriculum implementation this first year (See Table 4.3).

Year Two

Fourteen families (82%) concentrated on their children’s academic weaknesses during the second year. The parental role was characterized by explicit teaching. Socially, fifteen of the families (88%) participated in extracurricular activities and sixteen of the families (94%) mentioned field trips or school related travel to be very important to their academic program.

Year Three and Beyond

Fifteen families (88%) reported that their children were much more independent academically the third year. Fifteen families (88%) said that their children’s interests were an important consideration when making curriculum choices. Ten families (59%) reported dialogue and oral communication as an important facet of their home school.

All of the families reported being socially active by this time, and fifteen families (88%) were active in a support group. Nine families (53%) had children that volunteered regularly, and eight families (47%) reported some kind of short or long term apprenticeship or employment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Characteristics</th>
<th>Percent of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Feel anxious about ability to teach and new role as parent/teacher</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum implementation extremely difficult</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced unexpected emotionally difficult situations</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Concentrated on child's weaknesses</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular participation in extracurricular activities</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field trips and educational travel</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Children more independent academically</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child's interest very important in curriculum selection</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue and communication very important</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family is socially active</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active members of support group</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer regularly</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apprenticeship or employment</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Curriculum Implementation Change Over Time
Fourteen families (82%) said that the parental role was characterized by a facilitator/partnership in this lifestyle learning environment (See Table 4.4).

**Summary**

Making the decision to home school was often agonizing for parents who did not feel competent or qualified to begin such a venture. Many parents made the decision because they felt they had no other options. Very few of the families in this study ever considered home schooling through high school. Now all the families speak with conviction and excitement as they describe their plans for teaching their children through the teenage years.

Parents remembered working hard and being overwhelmed physically, mentally, and emotionally during the early years of home schooling. They remembered their feelings of inadequacy and how they worried about what others might think regarding this wild venture they had undertaken, often with no outside support or knowledge about learning styles, individual needs and interests, or curriculum.

Additionally, parents specifically discussed a major change that occurred as they home schooled over time. Their emphasis is now placed on their children's spiritual and character development. In 94 percent of the families, this was mentioned as more important than the academics and the primary reason they continue to home school. They hasten to explain that it isn't that academics are not important, but over time they have come to believe that without deep religious convictions and strong character development, the academic knowledge would not, by itself, carry their children into a productive and satisfying adult life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Characteristics</th>
<th>Percent of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parent as Parent</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parent as Teacher</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parent as Facilitator/Partner</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Parental Role Change Over Time
The parents also have a new focus on family relationships. This was articulated by 90 percent of the parents that brought their children home after attending another school and by all the parents who had kept their children home from the beginning. The parents who had sent their children to school felt strongly that they had nearly lost something very precious by allowing their children to be gone for so many hours each day; something they didn't even realize they were losing until they found they had to reestablish those relationships.

The next chapter will present a more detailed look at three families that have home schooled for an extended period of time. It concludes with a summary of their similarities and differences, and then compares them to the other fourteen families in the study. Findings from previous research will also be connected.

Chapter six will present a discussion of the three themes that emerged as being the underlying structure for successful long term home schooling: family relationships, curriculum implementation, and parental roles. These themes will be presented on a transitional chart entitled “The Cycle of Transformation in Home School Families.” Also discussed will be the instructional components that became evident in each of the case study families in spite of their innate differences. Implications and ideas for further research will also be addressed.
CHAPTER 5
CASE STUDIES

Introduction

This was a naturalistic study, a discovery-oriented dynamic approach, designed to "understand and document the day-to-day reality of the settings under study" (Guba, 1978 in Patton, 1990: 42). The primary focus of stage two was the implementation of curriculum after the family had home schooled for a minimum of three years.

In order to discover methods and meanings of particular activities, I observed three families over a period of six weeks, spending a minimum of four to six hours with them each week. Observations were not confined to their homes, though that is where most of the time was spent. I attended private lessons, support group activities and classes, dramas, horseback riding competitions, and work. I also went to a surprise birthday party for one of the children, where I had an opportunity to meet and talk with many other home schoolers in an informal, nonschool setting.

The original three families that were selected as the case studies all agreed to participate at this stage. These particular families were selected because they were recommended by an insider who believed them to be typical but not extreme examples of home school families. Other characteristics that were considered included their willingness to participate,
their openness to share experiences, and their original motivation to home school. I also wanted parents who had different educational backgrounds.

The first family decided to home school for ideological reasons, the second for academic reasons, and the third family had social concerns that culminated in the decision to bring their children home. Parents from one family have both graduated from high school; one family has one parent that completed high school and the other college; the third family is comprised of two college educated parents, both of whom are teachers.

Only the ideological family actually wanted to home school. The other families were very much against the idea of home schooling, but because of extenuating circumstances, felt forced into it. All three families are currently home schooling their children through high school.

The purpose of doing these case studies was two fold. I wanted to document the teaching style and curricular implementation of each family, and verify descriptions of their school as they had relayed them to me earlier during the interview process. In each case, there was no discrepancy between what I had been told during the interviews and what I actually observed three months later.

Secondly, I was searching for ‘key linkages” and patterns of generalization across the cases (Erickson, 1986). In spite of the differences within the families, there were patterns of instruction and implementation that emerged that were very similar, family to family.
Case Study One

The Murray Family

Maureen and Jack Murray have been home educating for ten years. They have home schooled since their oldest daughter, Joyce, started Kindergarten in 1989. She is now a freshman in high school and is following a college preparatory curriculum so she can go to college. Their second daughter, Elizabeth, is twelve and in the seventh grade. They have a preschool daughter, Mary, who is four. Both parents have a high school education and they began home schooling for ideological reasons.

Making the Decision

When Maureen heard her call from God, she had no idea how to go about home schooling and did not know anyone who was doing it. Her daughter, Joyce, was still a baby and the year was 1984. Home schooling was not yet 'legal.'

For me, continuing to home school is easy because I am so sure that it is exactly what God wants me to do, at least for right now. Maybe it won't be this way next year, but for now, I know this is what I am supposed to be doing. I'll never forget that day when I was rocking Joyce, and God spoke to my heart and told me that she would never go to school. I really had no idea what that meant. It was strange because we had only been Christians for about two years. I didn't know anyone who was home schooling. When I told my husband, Jack, he was supportive but he told me that if it had been up to him, he
probably would have put the girls in school. So anyway, after that, I heard a James Dobson broadcast about home schooling and I just started finding out about it and reading everything I could find.

**Family Relationships**

Maureen and Jack had both had very tumultuous high school years. After drifting for a while, they decided to get married, but things didn't get any better. Finally they decided that until they made a spiritual commitment to God and to each other their lives weren't going to improve.

I had a grandmother who prayed for me but I went into a life of drugs. There was such a void in my life. Jack and I had been married for two years and we knew this guy that kept telling us about Christ. Finally, our lives were so messed up, we had no place else to turn. We committed our lives and our marriage to God.

When Maureen had her baby girl two years later, she was still learning a new life style with different priorities and a new direction. She and Jack were going to work hard to have a close family and raise their children in a godly home.

**Finding Curriculum**

In order for Maureen to learn about home schooling, she had to find opportunities to see curriculums, meet others who were home schooling, and hear speakers who could encourage and inform her. During this time home schooling was just beginning to emerge as a viable option to conventional
education. People still had a lot of questions about what it really meant to teach your children at home.

The first convention I went to was at World Harvest, a big church on the east side, and Raymond Moore was the keynote speaker. Joyce was three or four at the time. That was around 1987. I don't think I had any specific goals or objectives when I first started but I knew I had to teach them how to read and write and do arithmetic. For some reason, I had the utmost confidence in myself. I just thought that since God wanted me to do this, that I would figure it all out. Me and my big high school education.

Making a choice. Maureen was overwhelmed at all the choices she had and the differences between curriculums for teaching beginning reading and writing. She finally decided to purchase a traditional Kindergarten phonics program she found at one of the conventions.

My high school friend probably influenced me the most in those early years because she was really bold and adamant about what she was doing. I think she had a scope and sequence typed in her mind. But I wasn't nearly so self-assured. I didn't know how kids learn best so I went traditional when I first began. I searched the curriculum selections faithfully and decided on Sing, Spell, Read and Write for preschool and Kindergarten.
Building a community of friends. As Maureen started learning more about home education, she started finding others who were also interested in home schooling. Suddenly, it seemed that everyone she knew was doing it, and she had other friends that could help her also.

Before we started I had told one of my friends about home schooling. She had a daughter two years older than Joyce and she just started on her own. Then I discovered that another of my friends from high school was doing it. Then several more families from the church started.

Maureen had a baby boy in July, 1989, just weeks before they were to begin home schooling Joyce for Kindergarten. She had her curriculum ready and anticipated a busy but exciting fall.

Year One

Unexpected Trauma

The first year, however, was not what the Murray family expected. In September their car was broken into and they decided to sell their house and move to a better neighborhood. Then, only days later, their five week old son was diagnosed with a serious liver disease and they were in and out of the hospital constantly for several months. During this time, they had to find another place to live.
Just before we found out how sick my son was we had put our house on the market because our car had been broken into and we were getting concerned about the neighborhood. We figured it would take a long time to sell but it sold for cash in eleven days. Our baby could only be treated by having a liver transplant and we were constantly in and out of the hospital with him that whole fall. He needed a lot of care because he had to be in perfect health if a liver became available so that he could have the surgery at a moment’s notice.

Finally, after Valentine’s Day, a liver became available and our baby had the surgery. We spent a month in Children’s Hospital wondering if he was going to live or not; I slept there the whole time and would never leave him unless my mother or my husband was there. But afterwards, in February, he died.

Coming home. In order to help Maureen while she was in the hospital with her son, one of her best friends kept Joyce and Elizabeth while others from their church prepared their new home. During this time very little school work was done. The family was in survival mode.

One of my best friends kept the girls the two months we were going through this in the hospital. We had found a house but it was right before the surgery and it needed a lot of repair. Our church friends cleaned, laid carpet, painted, set up the beds, and even put towels in the closet for us so that we would have a place to come home to.
Then my grandmother died and my husband’s grandmother died all within a fourteen day period. When we finally did move my girls had been staying with my friend and now we were going into a strange house. In February the baby went back into the hospital due to illness and a transplant became available. He had the surgery but he died a week later. In spite of all this, Joyce learned to read!

Due to the extraordinary circumstances of this first year, Maureen’s role as teacher consisted mainly of reading to her children and doing occasional math and art with them. They were also very involved in their church. Joyce did learn to read but the family was emotionally drained and exhausted. Maureen was still determined to home school, and now that the family was settled into a new home and not having to care for a sick baby, she could focus her attention back on ‘school.’

**Year Two**

**Enrolling in a Satellite School**

The second year, when Joyce was in the first grade, Maureen got very nervous because the Ohio State Regulations were now in full force and she was worried about the legal ramifications of home schooling. Unlike any of the other families in the study, Maureen decided to enroll Joyce in a local satellite school the second year they were home schooling so someone could oversee their work.

But then when it came legal time for first grade, I got real panicky and enrolled Joyce in a satellite school. I hated it. We had all
these workbooks to do, in four or five subject areas, and all we did all
day was 'school.' We had two Bob Jones readers and workbooks and
also a spelling book we had to do every day. In addition, we had
workbooks for social studies, science, health, and math. We also had
a very structured Bible Study program that also had a workbook.

Once a month we had to take all our workbooks to the school to
meet with a teacher. She would check everything over, making sure
we did every page we were supposed to, and then she would sit with
Joyce and quiz her on everything.

Not a good match. Maureen soon decided that the satellite school
was not a good choice for her family. She disliked the curriculum they were
required to use and the family was still adjusting to all the changes that had
occurred during the previous year. Maureen found that her role as 'task
master' was unpleasant and unfruitful.

I was always worried that Joyce wouldn’t know the answer to
one of the questions the teacher asked and she would think that we
weren’t doing the work. It was very stressful and not fun at all. The
books were really hard and I had to read a lot of them to her, even
though she was already reading by herself. I can remember thinking,
"I can do this on my own and I don’t like these books either." I didn’t
even like the Bible curriculum we were required to do. That by itself
took us an hour every day.
By the end of that year Maureen was ready to make a change. Family relationships were strained because of the demands of the satellite school and the extensive use of workbooks that took several hours each day to complete. Elizabeth wasn't learning to read as easily as Joyce had and Maureen wondered if it was because the curriculum was too structured and demanding or if it was because she was not implementing it properly because she was still grieving for the loss of her child. She decided if there wasn't so much pressure, maybe they would have more success. Maureen ordered the books she needed for the next year and decided to try it without being enrolled in the satellite school.

Year Three

On Her Own

Maureen decided to home school on her own the third year. The family was functioning better now and school was a normal part of their lives. Maureen continued to use some of the same materials the satellite school had used but she slowed the pace and tried to make it more fun. This year she wanted to be a more relaxed ‘teacher’ and enjoy the time with her girls.

So after one year we quit the satellite school and did it on our own. We were a lot less structured and the outside pressure was gone. The satellite school had used a lot of Bob Jones and A Beka curriculum so I just bought the workbooks myself and did them the way I wanted to. I still used the Sing, Spell, Read, and Write material also. That's been a major problem for me all along. I have always tried to do too much.
But Elizabeth continued to have trouble learning how to read. I always wondered if it was the curriculum or if it was me because I was still grieving. We would spend hours in those phonics workbooks and she hated it. I didn’t have any idea about learning styles and I know now that Elizabeth was a very different kind of learner than Joyce was. She was a lot more auditory and the workbooks just weren’t working. I also added another curriculum called Life Pacs that year too.

Curriculum Adjustments

Even though Maureen was spending a lot of time with Elizabeth, school just wasn’t going well. Maureen, once again, decided it was time to make some changes, but this time she wasn’t going to wait until the end of the year as she had before.

By the middle of the third year, which was really more like our second year because our first year had been so difficult emotionally, I was really burning out again. I was spending hours with Elizabeth and she just wasn’t reading well. I needed to try something different. This was crazy but a bunch of us from the church were all really frustrated with the workbooks and curriculums we were using - everyone was in their second or third year by then, and we all decided that we would make a drastic switch and start using the KONOS curriculum.

Unit studies. When Maureen finally decided that the workbooks were too much, she found a unit approach program that used library books in
combination with projects and activities to make the learning more interesting and fun. Several of her friends were experiencing similar frustrations, so they all decided to make the switch at the same time.

The KONOS material was completely different from anything any of us had ever used - it was a unit approach to learning. There weren't any workbooks and everything was based on themes. It had a great bibliography section and we would choose the activities we wanted to do and then get library books and use them as the texts. Our group met once a month and everyone would show each other what they had done. No workbooks, just reading great books and doing all kinds of activities.

My girls absolutely loved it, but gosh, it was a lot of work for me because I had to do so much preparation ahead of time. But what I really remember about that program was how much my children learned. We did a unit on beavers and they were so excited. I knew in my heart that this was the right way to teach; I just had to figure out how to get everything done. Even though it was a great curriculum for science and social studies, we still had to do math, spelling, grammar, penmanship, and English. I was really exhausted.

**Library books.** When Maureen burned out on the unit studies, she thought about what she liked and didn't like about the program and tried to create her own adaptation that she thought would work for her family. She decided to choose her topics based on grade level texts that she was familiar
with and then use library books to do the teaching. They didn’t do quite so many projects and that left time for the rest of what she needed to do.

So I made another change. Instead of continuing with the KONOS, I got science and social studies textbooks and followed their topics with library books instead of using the texts. We would just reference the textbooks so I knew what we were supposed to be covering. That’s when we really started loving history. For science we did a unit on the human body and one on nutrition. We really learned a lot. That was our third year.

After three curriculum changes during the third year, Maureen thought she had found a method that worked for them. In addition to all the regular studying, the girls were taking swimming lessons, learning American Sign Language, and attending support group activities weekly. They were also very involved at their church.

Year Four

More Curriculum Changes

By this time Maureen thought she had figured out what worked. Family relationships and emotions were stable and she was prepared to ‘have school’ every day. For curriculum she was using textbooks for math, spelling, English, reading, handwriting, and health. They used library books for social studies and science. But this time it was the girls who wanted a change. They said the textbook topics were boring and they didn’t want to study the same things over again.
By the fourth year though we were bored with the textbook topics. I didn't even want to use them for reference. There was so much review. I can remember the girls saying to me, "Mom, if we have to do Christopher Columbus one more time..."

History. Maureen scoured catalogs, home school magazines, and journals looking for something different. Coincidentally, the home school convention featured "history" that June, and friends recommended a new curriculum that looked great.

So then we found the Greenleaf History curriculum. We loved it. They give you a person they want you to study, a little background information, and maybe one major book, and then you take off. They also provide a bibliography and you just read everything that you want to. The program starts with ancient history and moves forward. We've stayed with this format for the last three years.

Science. Once they found a program plan they liked, Maureen started looking for other curriculums that allowed them more choice and flexibility in what they learned. They especially liked materials that gave them projects and activities to do.

We are doing the same thing with science now. I found a Science Guide and it has unit based studies. In addition to that we have a biology club once a week with our support group. From these
programs I found out how my kids learn best and how smart they are. Now they love to learn and they can do so much on their own. Even Elizabeth is learning to love to read! It’s so much fun.

The girls and I go through the guide and pick what they want to do. We’ll get library books and read and then do a final report. It’s really amazing how much we are all learning. I don’t know anything about biology, for instance, but we all learn together. I keep an eye on the grade level textbooks so I know that they are doing everything they need to, but there is so much review of topics that you really don’t have to worry much. And besides, when we study things on our own, we go into so much more depth that we learn a lot more than is given in the textbooks.

Literature. The literature program Maureen found was what really made the difference for Elizabeth. She thinks it’s the idea that there are so many choices and the projects are so much fun. Another important feature, however, is that they can spend a long time on one topic, and do so many different things.

I have a great literature program now too. It’s called Total Language Plus. It combines all the English, grammar, literature, spelling, vocabulary, and writing and you do it by reading really great books. All the assignments are based on the novel you’re reading.

When I found this program, Elizabeth finally started to love reading. Most of the books are either classics or award winners. They give you an annotated bibliography and you choose which book you
want to read based on what you are interested in. There's a study
guide and it has projects to do, essays to write, questions that really
make you think. It's very interactive so I read the books too and then
we discuss them. They even have history and science projects.

There's four categories and you pick a few topics and do maybe
two research projects which last about six or seven weeks. You have
to use the library and get references, draw maps, do spelling tests
based on what you are reading. When we started with this curriculum,
it was the first time Elizabeth ever got 100's in spelling. Everything just
makes so much sense and it is so much easier if it's taken from
something you are interested in and currently reading.

Both girls do this program almost entirely on their own. They
even set their own goals. It frees me up to just oversee and guide. I
still check their work on a regular basis but mostly I answer questions
and make sure they have all the library books they need.

Community Resources

Outside activities are an important part of this home school program.
They use tutors for more difficult subjects and participate in both academic
and social support group activities. They also travel whenever an opportunity
presents itself and do many volunteer activities through their church.

Extracurricular activities and volunteer opportunities. Maureen
capitalizes on every available resource that she thinks will help her children
learn and grow. She also believes that if the girls are having fun and are
interested in what they are doing, the learning opportunities are going to be
even more valuable.
We really do a lot of extracurricular activities. We do piano, volunteer at least one day every other week at the Ohio Historical Society, and are very active at church. Joyce does clowning, puppets, and skits, and helps frequently in Junior Church on Sunday mornings. She also helps with Vacation Bible School and Backyard Bible Clubs in the summer.

Last summer Joyce’s puppet team went to New Hampshire to help one of our missionaries do a neighborhood outreach in an area where they are starting a new church. She helps her dad teach Junior Bible Quizzing on Saturday’s and both the girls have participated in big church dramas. Both go to camp in the summer and they are active in the Missionettes Program at church. It is a lot like Girl Scouts where they have to earn badges except they have to memorize a lot of Scripture and do projects during the week.

Educational opportunities. Now that Joyce is a freshman, they have gotten tutors in two subjects for Joyce. They participate in many fine arts activities at their church and do academic subjects during activity days with parents who are knowledgeable in particular areas of study.

The girls do art, music, and drama through our church. They are learning public speaking and learning to be responsible because other people count on them to help and follow through with their commitments. Both girls go to Spanish class every week and Joyce has an algebra tutor. We go to activity days where we’re taking
newspaper, art, and debate classes. On Wednesday’s this winter we are going with a group of friends for skiing lessons all day. Then we have volleyball Friday afternoons. When we get home we clean the house for the week-end.

Travel. Opportunities to go interesting places are important and Maureen looks for special things the girls can do that will make their learning more meaningful and fun. Last year the girls flew to California with their grandmother for an exciting ‘educational’ vacation.

The girls went on an historical trip to California for nine days with my mom last summer. They stayed with their aunt who lives in the Napa Valley on a vineyard. They panned for gold and went to Yosemite National Park and Fisherman’s Wharf in San Francisco. They rode the trolley cars and the cable cars, saw the redwood trees, and crossed the Golden Gate bridge. They swam in the Pacific Ocean and saw the tide pools at Monterey Aquarium. They kept a journal the whole time. It was a fabulous trip.

In spite of a very tumultuous and difficult start and numerous curriculum changes over the first four years, the Murray’s have discovered a life style academic program that works for them. Maureen says her family is very close and is proud of the relationships her daughters have with each other. This family is extremely busy, participating in extracurricular activities that are both academic and social. In addition, they spend many hours volunteering in their community and at church.
Maureen still checks the girls' work daily or weekly, and they have animated discussions constantly about what they are studying. She sees her role as a facilitator and partner in the academic process. She reads as much of the girls' work as time permits and has gotten tutors for algebra and biology now that her oldest is in high school. She also takes advantage of the Spanish and debate classes taught by parents in their support group.

An added benefit of home education for Maureen is how much she continues to learn academically. She hopes that someday she can go to college to be a teacher, but in the meantime, she is excited about learning with her girls.

Unlike the other families in the study, Maureen and Jack made the decision to home school for spiritual reasons before their children entered school. They continue to home educate for the same reason. Because of current local school policies, once families make the choice to home school for high school they usually do not have the option of sending their children back to public school without starting them as freshman. The Murray family will continue to home school their children all the way through high school.

Current Perceptions

Future Plans for Preschooler

Maureen is excited about teaching her preschooler and she has some strong ideas about how she's going to work with her.
When I teach my four year old I am going to do it completely different than I did with Joyce and Elizabeth. Boy, do I have big plans for her. I'll just start out with my science, history, and literature guides and we'll just read. And we won't do all that workbook stuff for reading either. We'll just learn the alphabet and go from sounds to letters. I have a bunch of little books that start them out reading as soon as they can put a couple of letters together. She's going to love it and we're going to have a wonderful time.

**How Children Learn Best**

When I asked Maureen how she thought children learned best, she told me that even though children were different, she still thinks there is a formula that works for all of them.

In order to home school I think it's important to know what kind of personality your kids have and what their learning styles and interests are. I believe that reading good literature and interesting books is how they learn best. And then by following up by practical doing. Putting what you've learned into practice.

**Reflections**

And finally, she says how content they are with home education. She believes that her children are learning and growing and that they have avoided many negative experiences that she hears about from others.
I am so happy that we have home schooled. Selfishly, I have learned so much myself. And I haven't had to deal with the negative outside influences that so many of my friends have experienced with their kids. We have a very close family, and my girls can hold a conversation with anyone.

Parental Goals

Maureen says that her goals for home schooling have changed over time. Originally when they began to home school, she thought it might be to just give her children a good start. But she says it's a lot more than that now.

And my number one goal has changed. I thought in the beginning that it was just to teach them how to read and write and do math, but now it's much more than that. I want them to be able to function greatly in the world and to be a positive impact on society. That's my main goal: to educate them so they can do what they want to do. What they feel called of God to do.
Case Study Two
The Davis Family

Carol Davis has a masters degree in elementary education and taught eight years before having her family. Dan also has a master's degree and teaches high school English and photography. He has been the yearbook editor for several years and also coaches tennis. They have two sons, Greg and Anthony, who are now fifteen and six years of age, respectively. The Davis’ lost their five year old daughter in 1991 after a year long struggle with cancer.

Making the Decision

The Davis’ decided to pull Greg out of school temporarily for academic reasons the summer before third grade. It wasn’t something they wanted to do but he was struggling with both reading and math and was falling further and further behind. Carol believed that if they just brought him home for one year, she could get him caught up and then let him go back to school. They have been home schooling for seven years.

We were making plans to adopt a baby. I have a friend that had started home schooling two years before and when she told me what she was going to do, I said, “More power to you, but I could never do such a thing. Greg would drive me crazy in a week because he is a non-stop talker.”
So I never had any thought that I would do something like take my son out of school even though I have a teaching degree. But then our daughter’s death changed things and he was having such a hard time. The main reason we finally pulled Greg out was because he was hating to read. Every word was a struggle. The year before our daughter had died so we were all still really grieving. I think he was having a terrible time trying to concentrate and everything was just so hard. I wanted him to enjoy reading. He was also doing very poorly in math and he thought he was stupid. He cried a lot and he was sullen and rude.

I knew that part of the personality problem was the grieving but part of it was that he just didn’t feel good about himself. He was attending a Christian school and they had a very accelerated curriculum, and that wasn’t helping at all. So I decided to take him out of school and work with him for one year. I was going to catch him up and then put him back. That was my goal at the beginning.

Family relationships were strained when Carol decided to pull Greg out of school because they were all still grieving the loss of their daughter. Carol wasn’t sure she had the emotional energy to home school but knew that Greg’s problems were not going to go away by sending him on to the next grade. She decided if she taught him for one year in a one-to-one situation she could get him to grade level and then put him back in school. She prepared for a year of emotional healing, less strained family relationships, and accelerated remedial instruction.
Choosing a Curriculum

Since Carol was an elementary school teacher with so much experience and education, choosing curriculum wasn’t as overwhelming and intimidating a task for her as it had been for most of the other moms. She knew there were differences and she also knew that she had to find something that was a good match for Greg. She just wasn’t sure what her options were and which curriculum to try first.

That summer I went to the state convention and attended several workshops. They were interesting but not extremely helpful. As we left though, we got a little baggie full of catalogs. I leafed through those and I chose books that I thought would be good. That was where I first got my curriculum ideas.

Reading. Reading was Carol’s main concern. She had some books from various curriculum companies but did not have much success with any of them. In the end, it was the easy readers from her Kindergarten class that helped the most.

As far as reading was concerned, I had an extensive library of easy, easy books. I had taught Kindergarten so that’s what I started using. I didn’t really have a reading curriculum for him. I had some books that I had picked up at yard sales, some A Beka reading books
which were phonics based, and some Bob Jones reading books that were better in content but still difficult. We started working our way through those. But they were just a chore. They were a struggle and that wasn’t what I wanted him to connect with reading.

Progress wasn’t as fast as Carol had hoped, and Greg still wasn’t reading fluently. It was a much bigger task than anticipated, and Greg had been struggling for so long that his self-esteem was now an issue. The only thing Carol knew to do was to make the reading so easy that Greg could not fail, and then to reward his efforts constantly, trying to erase those negative feelings of not being able to read well.

So I just went back to the real easy reading books that were not difficult for him and we started building on that. And I also used rewards. Rewards, rewards. He would be rewarded for reading by being allowed to watch one half hour of television. And he had a certain number of chapters or a certain number of pages that he had to read to get that half hour.

The books we used were real tiny so when he finished one or two, they were all only about 32 page pre-readers, he got his one half hour of TV. When he read one hundred books, he would get a toy. And we had already bought the toys. They were sitting on top of the refrigerator and he saw them every day. He wanted them desperately. So he read. And that’s how we started out reading. Now when he finishes reading one hundred chapters, I give him $5.00.
Additional subjects. Math was also a problem for Greg. Carol started out with a curriculum that looked as though it would be user friendly, but she wasn’t satisfied with it either. She tried to compensate in small ways for the difficulty of the math and reading by offering Greg a variety of materials and activities in other areas to keep his interest high and to make learning fun.

For math I used a curriculum by Rod and Staff. That didn’t work out real well over the course of the year but we just kept pecking away at it. I also used supplemental Homework Helpers for both reading and math that I picked up at The Teacher Store. For health we had an A Beka book called Proper Manners and Health Habits and we just read that together.

On Saturday’s he had a scholarship to the Columbus School of Art and Design and he loved going there for lessons. We also did gymnastics, tennis, swimming, and dance lessons. He was also in Cub Scouts. Once in a while we would get together with a home school support group.

Family Relationships

They were only into their school year by one week, however, when they got a call that a new baby was available for adoption. They were ecstatic, but it really complicated their home school routine. Carol was exhausted because the baby needed attention around the clock and Greg wasn’t functioning well on his own with either math or reading. They tried to do school work during the baby’s naps and between feedings but there was
no regular routine or schedule. Greg needed to be taught everything explicitly and could not work on his own. Adding to the confusion was the fact that Greg wasn’t improving as quickly as she had hoped.

We got a baby boy one week after we began home schooling. It was a real surprise and it threw our scheduling completely off. Everything went a little crazy. We had to do round-the-clock feedings and the baby had an irregular schedule. There was also a lot of adjustment just having a baby around. So it didn’t seem like we got a lot accomplished that year academically. I had to sit with him and teach him everything. He couldn’t do anything on his own. I had expected Greg to be a wonderful reader and a whiz at math by the end of third grade and then go back to school, but it didn’t happen that way.

**Individualizing Instruction**

Greg wasn’t catching on as quickly as Carol had expected and as the year continued, more learning problems became apparent.

As I taught him it became obvious that he didn’t learn the way schools teach. He is a non-sequential, random pattern learner. He learns things that he sees on a screen much more easily. He also learns things that are read to him. He has an incredible mind for details. And the more I taught him the more I realized that he just didn’t match with schools. He was a round peg in a square hole.
Besides his learning style, he has always had a tendency to be ADD. And that didn't seem to be getting any better.

The more Carol worked with her son, the more apparent his learning discrepancies became. He learned very differently from other children, and his ADD tendencies didn't seem to be improving. Keeping him focused, especially when the baby was so distracting and he himself was having such a hard time, was very difficult. He also lacked self-confidence and was not ready to do much work independently. It turned out to be a much more difficult and busy year for Carol than she had planned. She also realized that sending Greg back to school for fourth grade was no longer an option. They still had too much catching up to do.

**Year Two**

The second year was characterized by more trial and error experimentation with reading and math curriculum. The baby was a year old now and very mobile, and they were adjusting to their new family member. Their schedule did not improve significantly because the baby did not sleep much during the day and he was extremely active and into everything. Greg was still having trouble and not able to do much school work independently so Carol spent more time than she had planned doing explicit teaching with her son. She was still hoping that she would be able to send him back to school after one more year at home.
Curriculum Adjustments

Greg continued to need significant support from his mom, and she continued to struggle with the fact that Greg was having such a hard time learning from texts. Math didn't seem to be getting any easier either. To make sure she was covering everything, she went to the school to look at the math books being used in public education so she could compare the work she and Greg were doing with what the children in the schools were getting.

I went to the school because I was concerned that Greg might not be receiving the same type of information, especially in math. I borrowed several math books and reviewed them over a period of several weeks just to make sure he was getting what he needed. I still had every intention of putting him back in school as soon as I thought he was at grade level and could handle it.

Finding the right curriculum. But finding the right curriculum was not easy. Greg continued to struggle with reading and math and school work was very difficult, even at home. Carol continued using a variety of curriculum companies for reading materials and changed math curriculum both the second year and then again in the middle of year number three. She says it was very discouraging for both she and Greg but it was too important to stop trying.

Reading was a combination approach our second year. I used Rod and Staff readers, some A Beka reading books, and Homework
Helpers for comprehension. I also used lots of “chapter books” from the library and from our own shelves.

Math was a little more difficult as far as materials were concerned. I wasn’t satisfied with Rod and Staff math after the first year so I decided to try Bob Jones math. It sort of worked that year. The third year we continued in Bob Jones math, which was fifth grade, but we bogged down midyear. Then I started using the School of Tomorrow ‘Pacers’ in February. We continued using the ‘Pacers’ until November of last year [1997, 8th grade].

Again, he bogged down and that’s when I discovered the Math U See program. He completed the Intermediate text of Math U See last year, which covered 4th, 5th, and 6th grade level math. This year he is going to complete the advanced text, which covers 7th and 8th grade math. He has scored a very consistent 78% on his homework. So that’s the history of our math saga.

After trying four different math programs in six years, Carol finally found one that seemed to make sense to Greg. Now, she says, he tolerates math, and is doing better every day.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities have always been an important part of Greg’s school. He has attempted sports and has made lots of friends in the process. Mostly, they have taken advantage of public facilities and Parks and Recreation programs.
Greg was involved in a soccer program for a year or two and also took tennis lessons in the summer with the Hilliard Parks and Recreation. He took canoeing with the Columbus Parks and Recreation and he went swimming at the Columbus Public Pool.

**Year Three and Beyond**

Family relationships had improved significantly by this time. The grieving process for their little girl was subsiding somewhat and they were busy caring for an active preschooler. Carol and Dan were enjoying having Greg home all the time and the flexible schedule home schooling allowed made their lives much less complicated.

By fifth grade they were both convinced that Greg needed to be home for at least another year or two, probably through middle school. He was definitely improving, but it was still taking a long time to get everything done and they were concerned that he would not be able to keep up in a classroom where there were a lot of distractions because of his ADD. Carol was still doing a lot of instructing, but Greg was showing signs of independence so she was encouraged.

**Home Schooling as a Life Style**

Carol was sure if she sent Greg back to school, there would be hours of homework at night and no time for other activities that had come to be important to them as individuals and as a family. She had worked so hard at getting him to grade level and raising his self-esteem that she didn't want to risk their progress by sending him back to school.
Daily schedule. The Davis’ were settling in by the third year to their own schedule and pace. They were also beginning to appreciate things that hadn’t been available before because of the time constraints of regular school. Greg enjoyed having afternoons to develop new interests, travel, and take special art lessons.

Greg is a real slow mover in the morning. His body clock doesn’t kick in for about two hours after he wakes up so we don’t get started until about 9:00. First thing, every other morning, he goes downstairs to the basement and works out. He has a regular routine that includes push-ups, leg lifts, hand grips, arm lifts, sit ups, and dumb bell curls for his arms. He started out only lifting the bar but he has worked up to putting 35 pounds of weights on each side, for a total of 70 pounds now. He is very proud of himself.

I take our youngest son, Anthony, to Kindergarten because he is very active and distracting when Greg is trying to get his work done. By the time I get back, Greg has already begun his school work. I have a list of things that he is to do each day on his own. We usually do history together because he learns so much more when we can discuss the concepts.

We always try to get math, language, and science done by noon. But I am flexible and we just get as much done as we can. We stop at noon and Greg usually cooks lunch for everybody. That’s his job. Then from 1:00 to 3:00 he does independent work. I try to check it daily and we go over the things that are wrong.
Carol says her preference is to spread ‘school’ out a little more than they do. She doesn’t like going from topic to topic in the morning but with an overactive six year old at home in the afternoons and with Greg so distractible, it’s important that she get as much as she can done before Anthony comes home. Some mornings though, they run errands and do other activities they also count as ‘school.’

I feel like we push pretty hard in the morning to get everything done, but once Anthony is home, it’s too hard to concentrate. Next year with Anthony in first grade, school will be a lot more spread out. We don’t always just do school while Anthony’s gone though. For instance, yesterday I had to return one of Greg’s videos, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin,* to the library and then we went to vote. We’ve been talking about all the candidates and the issues when we do our current events. The most interesting one on the ballot for Greg this time was the Dove Issue. We have talked about it a lot and he can argue either side. They let him go into the voting booth with me whenever I vote and he loves it.

Family distractions. Getting a lot done with younger brother, Anthony, has been difficult from the beginning. He is a very active child and almost totally opposite Greg in both personality and temperament. He loves Greg, and when Anthony is around he wants to be with his big brother all the time. Greg needs it quiet to get his work done. Putting Anthony in Kindergarten this year has made Greg’s day much more productive.
I really struggled with putting Anthony in preschool last year and then in Kindergarten this year because I didn’t want him to think that I was trying to get rid of him. But his energy level is so high and constant that we just can’t get much done if he’s here. In retrospect, I think it’s been one of the most important decisions we have made. Anthony loves to go and we need the quiet!

Yesterday was a perfect example of what happens when we don’t get everything we need to done in the morning. Greg had finished the *Pony Express* book the day before but it had taken him a week to finish a 140 page novel. I don’t think he liked it very well. I wanted him to at least get started on the second Johnny Spoon book right away because these novels are paralleling what we are doing in history and they are giving Greg a frame of reference for our subject.

So I decided if I read the first three chapters to him it would give him a jump start and maybe he’d even like the book better. But once Anthony got home from Kindergarten and we had lunch, Anthony was being so distracting that I had to take him outside just so Greg could get something done. I sat and talked to a neighbor while Anthony rode his bike, raked leaves, and played on the swing set with his friend. Greg stayed inside and got all his school work done. He worked the entire time. I didn’t get to read the book to him, but he got a good start on his own anyway.

**Dialogue.** As I spent more and more time with the Davis family, I became aware of the constant dialogue that was going on between mother and son. They discussed everything and Carol made a conscious effort to
take the time to explain carefully whatever it was that Greg was wondering about. As a result, Greg seemed very comfortable talking to adults in general, and was interested and had opinions about a great many topics.

I was also impressed by their level of conversation. It was not the typical mother/son dialogue that one often hears but it was more adult to adult or friend to friend.

One morning we went to Walmart to get art supplies for a craft Carol and Greg were preparing for their home school support group meeting the next day. They purchased several miniature flower pots and Carol wanted Greg to hand paint them when they got home. Greg asked if he could spray paint them because there were so many [25-30], and Carol’s first reaction was “No.” But Greg persisted, “Why, Mom? There are so many.” Carol stopped for a moment and thought about what Greg had asked. “It looks nicer,” she answered. Then she hesitated for another moment and said, “You know, I think you’re right. These are just for the little kids and they don’t have to be perfect. That would take a long time. Let’s buy some spray.”

I was impressed that Carol changed her mind and also with Greg’s respectful tone when he challenged his mother’s request. It was a great example of interaction as it should be in a well adapted home.

On another occasion when Carol had left to pick up Anthony from Kindergarten, Greg initiated a curious but delightful conversation with me.

“I think it’s sad that sometimes animals have to be put to sleep when they are injured or very sick.” [I wondered if this comment had been spurred by something he had just been reading?] “Unless, of course,” he continued, “they are vicious. We used to have a Rottweiler
that lived right behind us. His name was Tyson because the first thing he did when he was a puppy was go after a baby's ear."

“Where’s the dog now?” I asked.

“On a farm,” he answered. “You know, where they treat dogs like puppies all the time. Play with them and stuff. They stay like puppies. They never really expect them to behave or act grown up. They just keep having fun.” He paused for a moment and continued, “I want to grow up, but also keep having fun. That’s why I want to be a teacher. I can do both, grow up and keep having fun with the kids!”

This home was relaxed but focused. Greg was expected to get his assignments completed in a timely manner and his mother held him accountable. There was a lot of conversation going on throughout the morning because that was when his mother worked most closely with him. Following are excerpts from my field notes:

I am again struck by the amount of conversation that is occurring. Today is a typical day. They are doing science and discussing Galileo and Copernicus and the heavens. Carol is reading from a Bob Jones eighth grade science text. She is sitting on the couch and asks Greg to summarize what they read yesterday; he does so easily and with interest. Then she reads, only a few sentences or a paragraph, then stops. Then she asks Greg to restate what she has just read. The vocabulary is new and difficult. He is laying across the couch with his head on a pillow, stretched out and comfortable. He is handling a small toy, but very attentive. Mom keeps eye contact.
The house is very quiet. When he shuffles to change positions, she does not appear to notice. He responds to her question with another question; she answers by asking another question that will help him clarify his thoughts. He answers, and Carol continues to read. And so it goes. Her scaffolding is artful, and I can see how interested Greg is becoming in astronomy (Field Notes, 10/20/98).

Carol has cultivated an interest in astronomy based on the science text and current events. To make this topic even more interesting and fun, she purchased a telescope for him in August and he has been using it regularly at night. She has also followed the newspaper reports of the space training program with John Glenn and talks to Greg about this topic frequently, weaving it into their science curriculum.

Field Note Excerpt:

The article they read today stated that the space program was controversial because of what had happened to Christine McAuliffe on *The Challenger*. They also discussed how having John Glenn, a 77 year old, train for a mission has brought new life to the space program. Carol and Greg discussed this article for 25 minutes and Greg was totally involved every second. Greg is very interested right now in anything to do with space. At 2:00 EST today, John Glenn is going to lift off. Greg can’t wait to watch (Field Notes, 10/27/98).
Field Note Excerpt:

Daily Carol brings to Greg’s attention items in the news. These vary in content, but very often they have to do with current world events or with editorials. Carol doesn’t just give Greg the articles to read or tell him about them; she uses this to discuss important concepts with him. Today the news item and editorials are about the Space Program [since their science unit has been on space and Greg has been using his new telescope on a regular basis].

As Carol read the very long article to Greg, he listened attentively. Carol stopped every so often to restate, explain, or expound on certain points. Greg would respond in some way and she would continue reading. Greg was very interested in this particular article and Carol pulled out vocabulary words like “quarantine” and “controversy” for further explanation and review (Field Notes, 11/10/98).

Community outreach and participation. Carol believes that being involved in her community is a critical part of home schooling. She makes a concerted effort to get to know her neighbors and to be a ‘Good Samaritan.’ She hopes that her boys will learn to care about other people by watching her and being a part of what she does.

We are very involved in our neighborhood and our church. I think it’s really important and beneficial because my children are also seeing what I do. Anytime there is a problem in the neighborhood or someone has a new baby or has experienced a loss of some type my
children's first reaction is, "Well, when are we going to take them a meal?" They know we are going to do that. It has become a learned response: to meet the needs of others.

For instance, last week we made fifty mini loaves of pumpkin bread to hand out to my neighbors at Halloween. We have done this for several years. Last year a neighbor ate the whole loaf before his wife got home. He called to see if I had another loaf because she was mad at him for eating it. We had a good laugh about that and I made them another loaf the next day.

Another example is Greg's question several weeks ago. "Mom, when am I supposed to start giving blood?" He didn't even realize that that is an option, but when I explained that it isn't a requirement, he stated that he intends to do so when he's old enough anyway.

Field Note Excerpt:

Anthony's school called one morning just as I arrived and wanted to know if Carol and Greg could run over for a few hours to help them bag tulip bulbs they were selling as a fund raiser. Carol agreed and made the comment that it would be a good opportunity to do something nice. Later she admitted to me that she had really wanted to do 'school' but felt that it was important for Greg to learn to respond to others' needs whenever possible (Field Notes, 10/16/98).

Outside opportunities. Besides developing relationships with neighbors and church friends, flexibility and variety have added a new dimension to the Davis' family life. Last year Greg went on a trip with another
home school family to Washington, D.C. Time for physical education activities and special art lessons during the week have also been exciting additions.

When you decide to home school and then do it for awhile, you soon realize that it is important to have community connections or to be a member of a support group. When you pull yourself out of the public school system, you are really alone because everyone else’s schedule and activities are so different. Home schoolers are not generally welcome at school events, sports, or drama activities. So, in effect, home schoolers are forced to create a community unto themselves.

Greg goes swimming with friends all year at a local pool. He also loves to play tennis, fish, and roller blade. A year or two ago a friend of mine who was home schooling asked if she could take Greg to Washington, D.C. for five days with their family and several other friends. They had a fantastic time touring the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, the FBI, the National Geographic Museum, the Washington Monument, and the National Cathedral. They also went to Mount Vernon.

Art lessons. When Greg’s Saturday morning scholarship at Columbus School of Art and Design ran out, his mom found a former art teacher and CCAD graduate who was willing to give Greg an individualized art lesson every Friday. The morning I tagged along Carol had just purchased some large wooden panels for Greg and he and his teacher were going to create 203
an oil painting of a dragon on them. His teacher, Sylvia, showed him how to
frame and shape the wood with a jig saw before they hinged the panels
together.

Greg was animated and totally engaged the whole time Sylvia was
working with him. He had already sketched out the dragon he wanted to
paint and he was anxious to get started. Carol explained that this is a new
interest for Greg and he is very excited.

As a result of this activity with wood panels, Greg has
developed an interest in woodworking. On the way home from his art
lesson last week we stopped at two new woodworking stores in town
to inquire about lessons and cost. Next Thursday afternoon Greg is
going to a woodworking class and will learn about pen turning. It will
cost $35 and the class will last approximately three hours. What he
makes will be his dad's Christmas gift.

During the fourth year of home educating both Carol and Dan had
come to believe that their son needed to be at home to reach his highest
potential. Though they were very pleased with his progress, and even
though they now had him at grade level in most areas, they felt his growth
and confidence were too fragile to jeopardize by sending him back to a
competitive, stressful environment that would be difficult for him to function in
productively. He still had problems focusing for long periods of time, and his
learning style was obviously not one that could be compensated for in a
classroom. And finally, he was beginning to feel good about himself and get excited about learning new things. Life was good, and Greg was showing great improvement.

Curriculum Selection.

Because of Greg’s learning disability, math has been the Davis’ biggest challenge curriculum wise. Carol explained how she had used four different programs before she stumbled onto one that used video’s and small blocks.

The math program we are using now was an accident. I had used four different programs before I found this one. I had a yard sale and advertised that I had home school materials and this lady came to my house and asked me if I would watch this demo video tape. She was going to have to pay for it unless she could get three people to watch it so I reluctantly agreed. I was sold in the first fifteen minutes though because it was a video presentation of math and it used a lot of little blocks like legos that Greg just dearly loves. It was right up his alley.

Matching learning styles. Carol continues to search for materials that will be compatible with Greg’s learning style. Expense is an issue, but it is still less expensive than private school tuition and the right curriculum is critical for Greg to continue making progress.
The other materials that I am using I find out about in magazines like *The Teaching Home* where there are personal testimonies and short articles about different curriculums. I spent about $300 per year the first year or two we home schooled. I know I spend more than that now, though, because of all the historical books we buy and the math program we use. The math is about $150 because it has a teacher’s manual, a set of video tapes, a teacher’s plan book, the student book, and a set of blocks. There are also some supplemental blocks and algebraic inserts.

**Computer.** Because of Greg’s preference for auditory and screen learning, the computer has been an obvious and welcome addition to the Davis’ curriculum. Dad also loves the computer and thoroughly enjoys seeking out programs that will help his son learn.

One afternoon I spent two hours with Mr. Davis going through the many CD’s they have purchased for Greg. Their interaction capability was what I found most amazing. Programs that we looked at included Math Heads, Photography, Hyper Production (which will be great for Greg’s bent toward creative writing), and an excellent commentary on Franklin D. Roosevelt. Greg currently uses an interactive Spelling Game, Typing Tutor, and Body Works [anatomy] on a regular basis.

Computers play a large role in our home school. Greg is a visual learner and he learns better when things are in color. For example, if his spelling words are each written in a different color it helps him create a visual image of the word in his mind. So he does a
lot of spelling on the computer. He also does a lot of science on the computer and we are acquiring several history programs too. His dad just found one on Franklin D. Roosevelt that he's very excited about.

We are planning to purchase a program that will help Greg write the stories that he makes up. He has a real gap between his written and oral language skills and there is a program available that he can speak directly into the computer and it will type what he says. We are going to get that so we don't lose all the creative things that he is making up. It will also help him with research and paper writing.

**Interest based learning.** Carol explains that after two grueling years of concentrating on the things Greg could not do well, they were both getting too discouraged to continue. She decided that she had to start focusing on more upbeat, fun activities that would build him up, and teach him to love to learn. Now, instead of focusing on what Greg can’t do well, they find things he can do well and that he enjoys. She also works hard at getting him interested in new topics by providing opportunities that are fun.

About year three I started realizing that hammering away at the weak areas was producing more frustration than anything. I wanted Greg to start feeling good about himself and his abilities. We began spending more time doing art, choosing books that he enjoyed reading, and having fun with our studies. We took time to experience new things like skiing and golf. I shifted from the mind set of trying to match the school experience and preparing him to return to the
classroom to the mind set of trying to get him to enjoy the learning experience and preparing him for a productive future.

So my focus shifted from getting him caught up with his peers so he can go back to school to getting him to enjoy reading for fun, learning for the joy of adding to one’s knowledge base, and able to find answers so that when a question comes up and mom and dad aren’t there, he’ll be able to find those answers without help.

I shifted from trying to make sure his math skills matched his friends’ skills to telling him he’ll probably always have to have a calculator handy, and here’s how to look at a math answer and assess whether it makes sense or whether he should try to do the problem over. Now we’re learning survival skills in the weak areas and developing his interests and strengths for a productive life.

For instance, Greg is real excited about the new telescope he got for his birthday. When I found it on sale, I couldn’t resist. He takes it out two or three nights a week and looks at the stars and the moon. His new science book has an astronomy chapter in it so now he’s looking forward to studying it.

Greg recently developed an interest in photography too. We bought him a really good camera and his dad is showing him how to use all the settings and take good pictures. We spent a day at the zoo recently and he got some incredible shots of the animals. He has a very good eye.
Individualizing, Scaffolding, and Independent Learning

Individualizing instruction, scaffolding, and working toward independence have been the major focal points for Carol throughout their home school experience. It wasn't until the fourth year that Greg was finally able to do most of the work on his own.

Science. Finally, by sixth grade, Greg could read a difficult grade level text in a subject he wasn't particularly interested in, and find the answers to the questions at the end of the chapter. It was a milestone for Greg and Carol was pleased that they had finally reached that point.

It wasn't until sixth grade that Greg could really do most of his school work on his own. The Bob Jones sixth grade science text had units on plants and animals. Greg wasn't very interested in the plants but I'd make him read it on his own and then have him answer the questions. He really balked initially but I knew he could do it. He wanted me to answer everything for him. He got so frustrated that I decided to give him the page number that the answers were on. That helped enormously. After we did that for a few weeks he was able to start doing more on his own. Now he can do nearly all the reading on his own, though he still prefers that we read and discuss it together.

History. History has been another area that Carol has had to expand and make more interesting. She found that using texts wasn't productive for Greg even though he could now read them. She decided instead to use as her base a pictorial encyclopedia and library books. She does a lot of the
history with Greg because he is so verbal and auditory. She doesn't want it to be a reading lesson; she wants him to understand the historical issues.

I found a twenty volume pictorial encyclopedia at a children's resale shop for ten dollars. That's the core of our American History program. It will probably take us three or four years to get through it. We read from it, and then every three or four pages when we get to a significant point of history we go to the library or order something from Scholastic Books that corresponds to our topic.

We have developed an extensive historical fiction and non-fiction collection of biographies and autobiographies. We have been averaging about two novels a month in addition to all the other reading we do. Mostly we read them together and we have a great time. We just finished *Johnny Tremain* and Greg has learned an incredible amount of detail about the events leading up to the American Revolution.

Reading. Reading has been a major concern for Carol since the beginning of home schooling. In fact, that was the original reason they decided to bring Greg home. Now that the initial goal has been met, Carol would like him to expand his reading interests.

When I started home schooling one of my goals for him was that he would enjoy reading in his spare time. We hit that mark last year. It took us five years to reach the point where he would grab a book when
we were going somewhere just so he would have something to do. The problem, though, was that it was always science fiction or fantasy.

One of my minigoals for him this year was for him to branch out and get interested in other topics. About two weeks ago he approached me and asked if I could find him a book on the Salem Witch Trials. I was really excited because it was the first time that he has requested something other than science fiction or fantasy. I found two and he's been reading them all week.

We also read *Julie and the Wolves* and then we read the sequels, *Julie* and *Julie's Wolf Pack*. We read *Hatchet* and then he read the sequels, *The River* and *Brian's Winter*. He is becoming a child who likes reading and I am thrilled. It took us a long time to get here! We go to the library once a week and he reads about two books a week. Last year he read between 60 and 70 books. I keep the list here in this notebook. For every 100 chapters Greg gets $5.00. He has earned $20.00 in the last three months!

**Record Keeping**

Carol has kept detailed records each year she has home schooled. Every autumn she submits a form to her local superintendent that outlines the subjects and the texts that she will be using over the course of the year. She also makes lesson plans each week and Greg has a separate book where he checks off the work as he completes it.
At the beginning of the year I buy a teacher lesson plan book for his daily assignments. I keep a separate one for myself and update it daily because it allows me more flexibility. Then if we have to slow down or alter it in any way, it’s easy to do. I also have a detailed overview of what I want to accomplish throughout the year.

In addition, I keep a running list of books he reads dividing it into fiction or nonfiction. I also keep a separate list of the history books he’s read. Field trips and extra activities also have a special page. Greg has his own lesson plan book where I write out his weekly assignments. He checks them off as he completes them.

Current Perceptions

Carol and Dan Davis started to home school because their son was having a difficult time keeping up academically in his classroom. They did not want to home school, nor did they intend to do it for more than a year. Even though Mrs. Davis was a trained elementary school teacher with extensive classroom experience, she still felt strongly that her son belonged ‘in’ school. Had Greg not had problems, the Davis’ wouldn’t have even considered home schooling.

Once they brought him home, however, things changed. Greg did not ‘catch up’ as easily or as quickly as they had anticipated, and in the course of trying to teach him, Carol soon realized that Greg learned very differently from most other children. He was very bright, but he found it difficult to adapt to ‘typical’ classroom materials or instruction.
As they kept him home longer and longer, the Davis' began to enjoy having 'school' at home. They loved the flexibility of their days and the extra time they had for friends, community activities, and special interests. They enjoyed doing things together as a family. Carol became intrigued learning about her son's idiosyncrasies and hidden talents as they emerged over time.

Carol also came to believe that sending Greg back into a classroom atmosphere that could not adapt to his learning needs was too cruel to consider. Greg is happy and productive, learning more each day about himself and the world he lives in. He is looking forward to a career contributing in some way to other's lives just as his parents have modeled.

Family Relationships

Carol believes that one of the most important things that has happened as a result of home schooling has been the close relationship that she and Dan have with their son. She says that home schooling has given them the time to develop this relationship and the shared activities have helped them bond.

Home schooling has been a major factor in providing us with the time to develop a very close relationship. Our relationship has also been strengthened by all the conversations we have. It has given us the opportunity to know Greg really well. We know a lot more about his likes, dislikes, and his disappointments. I think he feels quite comfortable telling me just about anything that is on his mind and getting my opinion.
Parents become mentors, counselors, and trusted companions. We discuss everything together. I feel like I am his buddy and his mom combined. I'm sure it’s because we do so much together. Conversations come up that just wouldn’t if we weren’t together all the time. He is never embarrassed to be seen with me.

Parental Goals

Carol’s goals, her relationship with her son, the curriculum, and her role have changed over time. When they first started to home school, she wanted Greg to catch up academically and then go back to school. She had to give him careful, conscientious instruction and experiment with many different curriculum’s and approaches before she found what worked best for him. As he became more independent, she was able to facilitate the instructional process more and find materials that were more interesting in order to expand his knowledge base. She sees herself more as a partner in the educational process and spends much more of her time planning, finding materials and resources, overseeing his work, and encouraging his progress.

Mrs. Davis says the most important thing now is Greg’s character and his belief in God. Secondly, they want him to be an independent thinker who loves to learn.

My overall goal is to train him to live by a high Biblical standard and to become a viable member of his community. I want him to have a high work standard and to be compassionate and well equipped to deal with adult life. We also want him to be an independent learner and one who will read the rest of his life.
Field Note Excerpt:

Every day, regardless of the amount of time they have allotted for school, Carol always begins with a character lesson. Currently they are reading a book by Josh McDowell called *Don't Check Your Brains at the Door*. It is an apologetic commentary on Biblical principals that have real life application for teenagers. Greg loves the book and he and his mom have a five minute, animated conversation about the current topic first thing every morning. This morning the lesson was on accountability (Field Notes, 11/3/98).

**Academic goals.** Carol's career goals for Greg are helping him to find something that he loves, can do well, and that will support him. Originally she thought he would do something exclusively in art, but lately he's been talking about being a school teacher. Now that they have definitely decided to home school for high school, she is working to adapt their curriculum so that he will have college options available to him when it's time to make a decision.

We have decided to home school through high school. We will have him get his GED and then attend either OSU or Columbus College of Art and Design. Up until this point we thought that he was moving toward a career in art. But this year he is talking about becoming an elementary school teacher. So, together we will make these decisions, preparing him for the career he wants.
I think I made the decision to home school for high school during our sixth year when he was in the eighth grade. My husband is an English teacher and I have access to a lot of English textbooks. I am confident I can get him through those. The math program that I selected this year came about by chance and I'm thrilled with it. I really feel that I can equip him for the kind of math he will need. He has become self-sufficient in science this year and there are also a great many science computer programs that will allow me to keep good records. With a little mentoring he'll be fine. The foreign language is my main concern. But I think between getting a tutor and some good interactive computer programs, we'll be all right.

**Student Goals**

Greg has just recently begun talking about becoming a school teacher. He thinks that working with children would be fun, and he enjoys his little brother very much when he doesn't have to get his own work done. It's exciting to see how far he has come academically and how self-confident he is now.

This year I have seen Greg establish goals for his future which he wasn't doing at all until now. When he started mentioning that he might want to be a teacher, not just go into art, I started altering his curriculum some, because he'll need to go to a university for that, not just an art school. But home schooling is so flexible you can change things around and it's OK.
Carol believes that home schooling has changed their lives in a very positive and exciting way. Even though she has given up a career and the financial gains that would accompany working, she feels that the relationship she has established with Greg and enabling him to reach his fullest potential has made it all worthwhile. Having had this experience with her son, she believes that all children can learn if someone will just take the time to find the right method and materials.

It’s really important to figure out your child’s learning style and to try to find a curriculum that matches it. I am convinced that failure of a child to learn in any kind of setting is a poor match between the child and the curriculum. That’s a real benefit of home schooling. When you have a poor match you can change it, instead of trying to change the child. Develop your curriculum around the child and he will excel.

This family has experienced many of the same struggles and adjustments that the interview families exhibited in chapter four. Pulling a child from school creates a set of problems that are not present when children home school from the beginning. The family had to adjust to having Greg home all day; Carol had to create a routine that was comfortable for both of them; she had to establish herself as the teacher and the mother. In this case there were also sibling adjustments because the family was suddenly selected to adopt a new baby they had applied for previously. The baby did not have a schedule and did not sleep much so the first year of the Davis’ home school was a challenge both emotionally and physically.
Finding an appropriate curriculum for both reading and math was difficult from the beginning, and Carol had to do a lot more explicit teaching than she had planned. Year number two was characterized by a continued concentration on Greg's weak areas; year three Carol decided to expand their focus and spend more time doing things that would allow Greg to feel more successful. By this time Greg was becoming more independent and even began checking some of his own work. They also added community projects and community resources to make Greg's school work more meaningful and fun.

Because Greg is primarily an auditory learner, Carol has made a special effort to dialogue frequently and provide resources that were more adapted to Greg's special learning style. When their little boy was old enough, they enrolled him in a half day preschool so that Greg did not have the distractions of an overactive brother to divert him from his work. Now the family has a daily routine which allows Greg to have a predictable schedule and time to get all his work done.
Case Study Three

The McLaughlin Family

Jim and Amy McLaughlin have been home schooling for four years. Jim has a four year college degree in computer programming and Amy completed high school. Their children attended a Christian school for six years and had a very good experience. When the family moved they enrolled them in a public school. Only three months into the school year Amy discovered a social program being promoted in Ellen’s class that made her very uncomfortable, and some children started reacting to Seth’s attention deficit. The McLaughlin’s, reluctantly, felt they had no choice but to remove their children from the school.

The Decision to Home School

Finding a New School

When Ellen completed fifth grade, the McLaughlin’s moved. They enrolled their children in another Christian school but suddenly, in August, the principal called and said they did not feel qualified to accommodate Seth’s special learning needs.

We were transferring the kids to a new Christian school because we had moved, and then they called just three days before school was to start, and said that they didn’t feel that they could provide Seth with the learning support that his ADD required. So we went ahead and
enrolled them both in the public school but I wasn’t completely settled about it.

I had gone to public schools and I was one of those kids that was picked on the whole time and I hated it. And I did not want that for my children. So I was bound and determined I was not going to leave Seth there, especially. Ellen would have been fine, but I was not going to leave him in that situation. I just didn’t see myself home schooling.

**Becoming familiar with home schooling.** Over the next three months Amy spent time with a friend who was home schooling and read about the movement. She did not want to home school, but felt that her options were dwindling.

I had a friend that home schooled and during that time she gave me a whole stack of curriculum and catalogs about it. She lived on a farm right down the road from us. I remember spending a whole weekend in tears after she gave me the material. I probably only got about an hour of sleep. I just did not want to home school.

And besides, I didn’t feel qualified to teach. I kept thinking, “I can’t handle this. I can’t do this. I don’t want my kids home 24 hours a day.” Three days later I returned everything to her. Over the next three months, however, I became more and more convinced that I needed to home school.

**A new social curriculum.** During that fall Mrs. McLaughlin became aware of a curriculum the school called ‘New Age’ that was being promoted by 220
the school guidance counselor in Ellen's classroom. Ellen also started being very self conscious about her weight.

The school was using a New Age curriculum and the guidance counselor was talking to the kids about getting hypnotized. There were also lots of discussions about topics including euthanasia, teen suicide, and depression. I didn’t have any problem with that, per se, but my feeling is that if you start suggesting a lot of this stuff it gives young kids unnecessary ideas. I mean, if they are depressed, you deal with that on a one to one basis, not as a group.

Then we found something in one of Ellen’s books about meditating on spirit guides. We asked if she could be removed from this particular class and they said she'd have to sit in the office every day and wouldn’t be allowed to even do her homework. I asked if she could go to the library and they said no. Then she started weighing herself every day after school because she thought she was fat. Well, she’s 5'8" and weighs less than one hundred pounds. I threw the scales out, but I was still worried.

In the meantime, Amy was continuing her conversations with her home schooling friend and would often visit her during the day. Amy became more comfortable with the idea of home schooling, and garnered a lot of information from the magazines that her friend had ‘laying around.’
She’d invite me over for lunch or something and while she’d be sitting there teaching and working with her children, I would go through her books and certain things would catch my eye.

Making the decision. Jim and Amy finally made the decision to home school in early November, and the Wednesday before Thanksgiving was to be the children’s last day. Amy had selected and purchased all the curriculum, but she still wasn’t confident or sure that she wanted to teach her children at home. Then Seth had an incident on the school bus, and they knew they had done the right thing.

On the very last day of school Seth came home in tears because a neighbor kid started calling him retarded. He was devastated. It was the first time anything like that had ever happened to him. That incident confirmed what we already knew in our hearts. Bringing them home was no longer an option, it was something we had to do.

So the decision was made. Amy was nervous and reluctant but felt compelled to do what her heart told her was the right thing. In addition to making this unwelcome decision, Mr. McLaughlin had accepted a new job and they had to put their house on the market and eventually move. To make matters worse, Mr. McLaughlin’s new job was to begin on Monday, the very first day they started to home school. He would be gone every week from Monday through Friday. Amy was going to be completely on her own.
Year One

Amy was scared and nervous when she first began to home school. She was worried that she would not be able to do a good job, and still regretted not having the day time hours to herself. As with the other families in the study that removed their children from school, new routines and relationships had to be established, and the family had to begin thinking about mom as a teacher as well as a parent.

We felt as though we got forced into home schooling at first. I enjoyed my kids going off to school and having my days free. It’s sad, but that’s the way it was. I remember that first Monday morning. I was scared to death. I had all the curriculum laying on the kitchen table ready to go. But the moment I sat down with them I had such a peace and a calm. I’ll never forget it. I knew that’s what I was supposed to do, and I never looked back. And you know, I have always enjoyed having them home, even when we don’t have the best day.

Ellen was resistant to coming home at first but I think that it was because she didn’t want to leave her friends. Seth could have cared less. But after one week at home, Ellen didn’t want to go back. That’s all it took. Seth had a harder time with his dad being gone than with the home schooling. That little boy just lived for the week-ends when Jim would be home.
Family Relationships

Amy wasn’t sure what would happen when she started to home school. She was most concerned about her own ability to teach her children well enough that they would not fall behind. She knew that in order to be successful she was going to have to keep Seth moving and active. He was going to be a special challenge also because he was particularly attached to his dad and missed him enormously during the week. Unlike several other families in the study, however, having the children adjust to Amy as a teacher did not seem to be an issue.

My biggest worry was that I wouldn’t be able to work with them. I was afraid that they would lose ground compared to the average child and that they wouldn’t be able to get a job or keep up with everybody else. It was a personal thing. I felt inadequate to teach them and I had planned on Jim being there at night to help and support me.

We really had a great year in spite of all the turmoil of moving and the family not being together during the week. I knew the key was to keep Seth busy. Ellen was an excellent student so she was easy. And he was good at the table in the morning when we worked on our written assignments. I would let him move around a lot more in the afternoon.

I also let Seth help a lot around the house that year. We had to keep the house in perfect condition since it was for sale, and with Jim gone through the week, it was a great opportunity for us to do things together and to help us keep busy. When there were things that broke
or needed fixed, Seth would just jump in there and do it. He changed
tires, fixed locks on the doors, repaired broken windows.

**Establishing a Routine**

Amy knew that having a schedule was going to be very important.
They got up at the same time each morning and got the house in order and
took care of all their animals. Then they would do their schoolwork.

We all had chores first thing in the morning because the house
was for sale and we had to keep it spotless. We were usually up by
7:30 or 8:00 and would feed and take care of the animals first. At that
time we had hogs, cats, dogs, mice, and gerbils. The kids would clean
the litter and do the breakfast dishes. I’d take care of the house. We
had to have everything done in case someone wanted to see it.

We’d be sitting at the kitchen table by 9:00 doing our work. By
noon we’d be finished with all the written work. One morning a week
we would meet with a few other families in a gym and the kids would
play games for about two hours while I visited with some of the other
moms.

After lunch the kids would do some kind of craft and I’d read to
them. We did that the whole first year. We went through the Little
House on the Prairie series. I don’t think they remember too much
about it, but I sure enjoyed it. Seth had a couple boxes of popsicle
sticks and it was interesting the things that he would build while he
listened. He built cars, barns, houses. And Ellen would usually have those little wax sticks and she’d be making butterflies and things like that.

Seth. Seth was an extremely intelligent and active child. He was interested in everything but often had a difficult time staying on task and was very distractible. Amy’s biggest challenge was to keep him focused and busy.

I knew even then that Seth had to be doing something if I wanted him to learn. You have to keep his hands busy because he hears and remembers really well, as long as he is moving. Seth is extremely hyperactive and has APDD [an extreme form of attention deficit disorder]. He has a very high IQ and he’s an excellent reader but his language ability is only in the 80’s. That’s a huge discrepancy that has to be taken into account when someone is working with him.

Curriculum Selection

Seth was in the third grade this first year of home schooling and Ellen was in the sixth grade. Seth was an excellent reader but math and some of the language activities were difficult for him. Amy worked closely with him this year and tried to keep ‘school’ interesting while working hard in areas where she felt he needed the most help. Ellen was an easy student and except for an occasional explanation, she completed her work quickly and accurately.

Seth has always been an extremely active child. When he was two years old we caught him underneath the car looking at how
it all worked. He has a drive unlike anything we’ve ever seen. He is constantly moving, and he is so curious about *everything*.

He had learned how to read but as far as things like spelling and math, that was another matter. He’d had a tutor when he was in first and second grade; she was a learning disabilities specialist. She taught us a lot about how to work with him, what he needed, exactly what his problems were. We knew he was a kinesthetic learner and that he had to be moving all the time, physically doing things. So even though Ellen only needed about 1/8 of my time, Seth needed 120 percent.

**Curriculum choices.** Amy had purchased all the children’s books before they started home schooling. She used a good selection of materials from different publishers and tried to include a variety of activities that would be interesting and fun.

Seth had Alpha Omega reading, writing, and grammar texts, and an A Beka third grade math book. Ellen had Advanced Saxon Math, A Beka World Studies, and Backyard Scientist. We did a lot of the World Studies and the Backyard Scientist books together. Seth would listen while we read and discussed the units. In addition, both had the Weekly Reader Map Skills books, and an A Beka Health book. We also had an art and music program that I bought from Seton.

Seth also spent a lot of time on the computer. I usually let them do that in the evenings, kind of play around with what they wanted.
Ellen had piano lessons one day a week and then she'd practice at night on her own time. She loved it. She'd actually spend a couple hours playing.

Amy had a good first year with Ellen and Seth. She had the curriculum ready on their very first day, and the children progressed in spite of her deep seated feelings of anxiety. The children settled in quickly to home schooling and the family concentrated on getting their house sold so they could join Jim at his new location.

Year Two

The second year turned out to be more challenging academically but much better for family relationships. Over the summer the family had moved and Seth was much more content now that his father was home every night. It was harder now to keep Seth engaged in texts that were uninteresting or too difficult. He was older and because his parents were encouraging him and giving him opportunities to do things that he loved to do such as working on the cars, he was very motivated to get his school work done quickly. Amy was more familiar with Ellen and Seth’s learning styles and the areas where each child needed to focus, so she made different selections based on her experience the first year.

Individualizing Curriculum

Amy knew that her children were very different. It was going to be important to find the right materials and to keep both children busy. Ellen needed to have plenty to do because she worked quickly and best on her own.
Seth still needed a lot of direction but he needed to have school work that allowed him to move and be active.

Ellen. Amy bought all new curriculum that was even more challenging for Ellen. She also included outside activities that she thought would complement Ellen's program and be fun.

Ellen learns best on her own. She's bright and very gifted, and just naturally picks things up. I'd just be there to oversee what she was doing. As she went along, there would be an occasional question to answer but with very little input from me, she'd figure it out quickly and just fly through things.

I bought things for Ellen that year that she could do more on her own. Then she could go at her own speed and not wait for us. I got Algebra One, Writing and Grammar by Bob Jones, and Biology from A Beka. We also used the Excursions in Literature text, and two history books, The American Republic and Ohio History. Every day Ellen would sit at the table and do her work. Then I would check it at night.

She also started volunteering at the science museum one day a week. That was really great and she loved it. She learned a lot of science as well as acquiring terrific people skills. Both kids took swimming lessons at the YMCA, and we did a lot of physical education including horseback riding.
Seth. Seth was a very different challenge. Amy wanted to concentrate on some of the areas where he didn’t feel very successful, but she tried to temper it with things that he could do well.

From having worked with Seth the first year I realized that I needed to make a few changes. The math was fine, we just continued with the program we’d had the year before. But the grammar program needed to be changed. I joined a support group that year and met some women that had tried different curriculums and they suggested Stevenson’s Essential Grammar. We really liked it and I used it for two years.

I still used the Bob Jones reading text, but I bought the Stevenson’s Spelling Manual to go with the grammar book. It was very phonetic. In geography we concentrated on the United States and did state studies and maps. I used an A Beka science book and we also got an activity book for science projects.

Explicit Teaching

Since the children were using different materials this year, they didn’t do as many things together. Both would sit at the table most of the morning, but Ellen would be working on her own and Amy would be working closely with Seth. Amy’s role this year was to be a good teacher for Seth and to guide and facilitate learning for Ellen.

So that second year I really geared everything toward Seth. We did a lot more games. I concentrated on the things that I knew he was
having trouble with and we did everything together. But by mid year I was sensing that I needed to make even more changes. We had worked so hard on grammar and spelling that fall because those were the areas that were so difficult for him, but even though he tried really hard, he just couldn't get it, even with me right at his side. He would sit and cry. Finally, I just decided it wasn't worth it and we started doing things that weren't quite so hard.

Making curriculum changes midyear. Amy became concerned midyear when she didn't feel that Seth was making enough progress. She wanted him to experience some success and stop feeling so badly about himself.

Seth had developed many different interests since he was home, so we finally decided to focus on those instead of the things that he just couldn't do. For one thing, we spent a lot of time at the science museum where Ellen volunteered. When we picked her up we would go in two or three hours early because he loved being there so much. I thought at first that he wasn't getting much out of it, but he would come home and we'd be watching TV or something and he would tell us about a mineral or something else. And I'd ask him where he learned it and he would tell me that he read it at the museum. He remembered everything.

For reading I would let him read the encyclopedia. He'd be looking up something for one of the states we were studying, and he'd just keep on reading. Did you know that a washer has more metal in it than a refrigerator does? That's the kind of stuff he looks for. He knows all kinds of trivia.
Extracurricular Activities

Amy knew that the children needed to be active and involved in their community. She joined a support group as soon as they arrived in Columbus and she and the children made lots of friends quickly.

We joined the YMCA that year and went swimming every week. The kids did a lot of horseback riding, skating, sledding, bowling, biking, and fishing with their friends and their dad and I. We also went on a lot of field trips with the support group.

Amy made a lot of curriculum changes the second year for both children. She purchased more material for Ellen and it was a lot more difficult. She also allowed Ellen to work on her own. Amy ended up changing Seth’s curriculum twice, once at the beginning of the year and then again, midyear. She decided half way through the year that struggling with him for extended periods of time on subjects that were nearly impossible for him to do was not being productive, so she decided to change strategies and start concentrating on things he loved and could do well. Experiencing success became paramount to Seth’s emotional and psychological well-being.

Year Three and Beyond

Home Schooling as a Life Style

This family experienced many of the same frustrations that the other families had who removed their children from school. New family routines had
to be developed, mom had to adjust to having the children home all day, curriculum had to be changed at least a few times before one was found that seemed to be a good match. As in other interview families, the first year turned out to be difficult emotionally because they did not expect dad to change jobs and have to work in another city for much of the year. But in spite of Jim being gone and Amy’s reluctance to home school, now she can’t imagine sending her children back to school. She loves the closeness of the family and the flexibility they have to do things that are important to them.

Amy’s role as teacher has changed also. At first she sat with her children all day, doing school work, reading, and working on special projects. The second year she let Ellen work on her own, and Amy really concentrated on helping Seth overcome his academic weaknesses. By year three, Amy was focusing on the areas that Seth enjoyed and had some success in, and Ellen was volunteering regularly. Both children were very active in a support group, both socially and academically.

After four years of home schooling, Ellen has completed nearly all her high school requirements and spends a great deal of time working at the YMCA and training her new horse. One of Amy’s relatives gave Seth an old car to work on and between working on that and the farm, he finds plenty of interesting things to do. The family has continued their involvement with the support group and Ellen joined a debate team in the fall.

**Interest Based Learning**

Both Ellen and Seth have developed serious hobbies and spend a great deal of time doing hands on learning activities once the school books are done. Ellen developed a love for horseback riding and her parents bought
her a horse, which they keep at their farm. Seth has a passion for cars and trucks. His dad has set up a shop in their garage and Seth is constantly working on engines and anything else affiliated with a motorized vehicle. In addition, they have kept up their social and academic activities with their home school support group.

We purchased two horses the third year and Ellen started taking horseback riding lessons. She showed a few times and did really well, so we made a serious commitment. The next summer we decided to build a barn too, so that was a huge family project. The fourth year Ellen was invited to be an instructor at the YMCA and she started working there about ten hours a week. Ellen continued her volunteering at the museum until last winter when she started working.

Seth has continued to be our biggest challenge academically but he has made incredible strides. If he determines that he wants to know how something works, he will figure out a way to find out. His mind is always going, so it’s really hard to keep one step ahead of him. If it’s something that interests him, you can’t stop him from learning. But if it’s in a textbook and he has to sit down or he’s not particularly interested in it, that’s another story. However, if it has to do with cars or trucks, he’ll spend hours reading books cover to cover and probably have all the diagrams memorized besides. He is really amazing.

Seth is not a traditional learner. It’s still almost impossible to get him to sit down. So we try not to fight over the little stuff. He has to do his math, if he doesn’t he can’t work on his car. We decided that nouns and verbs aren’t all that important, but being able to hold a job and
running a household is. So we concentrate on practical skills. Last year we used a Chilton’s Auto Manual as his reading text. He has nearly all the diagrams in it for his car memorized. We talk a lot, and we show him how we purchase things and make financial decisions.

**Daily Schedule**

The family has a routine now that home schooling has become a lifestyle. Everyone knows what is expected, and each one is responsible for seeing that their duties are done in a prudent manner.

We have a full fledged farm now. We have two horses, four cows, geese, turkeys, three dogs, lots of cats, chickens, and four hogs. Ellen takes care of most of the feeding and the things to do with the animals. Every morning Ellen is up by 8:00 and she goes out to the barn to feed. By 9:00 she’s either in her room or sitting at the dining room table getting her school work done.

Seth gets up early, usually around 7:00, and he runs down the stairs and watches CNN news or the Farm Report. Then he starts his school work. He knows what his assignments are ahead of time and he gets it done as quickly as possible so he has time to work on his car and do other things he likes. Sometimes he works all day Monday just so he’ll have more free time on the other days.

**Large blocks of time.** Both children try very hard to complete their written work in the morning or during the first part of the week. Ellen life guards at the YMCA twice a week besides taking riding lessons and

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participating in a debate club on Monday nights. Seth loves to build things, and often his parents find him happily creating some unrequested item, oblivious to the world around him.

In the afternoons Ellen has to spend about three hours out in the barn with the horses. They have to be worked every single day, just like an athlete. She has to keep the stalls clean and make sure the horses are in good shape. We have a lot of money tied up in the horses and she has to share her part of the responsibility. But she loves it. And she couldn't do it and still get all her school work done if she were in school.

Seth is doing a lot more of his school work with his dad this year. They're spending a lot of time on math. He also loves to do things around the house and in the barn and is very motivated to start projects on his own. He never sits around. He's always so busy. One night Jim and I were talking about putting a trap door in the loft of the barn so we could throw the feed down to the stalls. He took it upon himself to do it, without telling us, and the next night we had a trap door. And it works great.

He's always got some project going. This winter he heard his dad say that the windows in our house needed winterizing. One morning I went downstairs and he had two windows out. He had found a book that showed how to do it and then proceeded to remove the panels, caulk the windows, put new seals in and then put them back together. He broke the first one but all the rest were perfect. We hadn't
said anything at all about the windows to him, he just overheard us
talking and decided he was going to do it. He got them all done in a few
short weeks.

He also enjoys the computer - as long as he’s doing something
that interests him. Last month we decided that we were going to sell our
truck. He got on the computer and made flyers advertising it. He had
the right price and exactly the right information on it. I didn’t even know
he’d made the flyers until I caught him putting one up at Farm Fleet!

One day recently we were talking about our budget and trying to
figure out how much car repair we were going to need. He heard Jim
say that he was going to check the car tires. So, without us knowing it,
he went out and made a chart that included the name of the car, the
size of the tire, and how much tread was left on each one. He actually
formulated a table. It was really neat.

He loves the John Deere plant and the auto auction place.
Sometimes we take him over to the auction and he just walks around
and gets all the brochures. He reads every one of them. And he knows
every piece of machinery John Deere makes, how big it is, what size
the engine is, and what it’s used for.

A family project. The summer after they got the horses for Ellen, the
McLaughlin’s decided to build a two story barn with a concrete floor and
a gamble roof. Other home school families heard about the project and
called to see if they could help. Seth had the time of his life participating in
a project made to order.
The summer we decided to build the barn, Seth was amazing. He would work a twelve hour day along side his dad and the other men. Even when friends would come over and the other kids would be riding on the horses or playing ball or riding bikes, not him. He would be up there walking the rafters. It scared the daylights out of me but finally I just figured he was in God’s hands and I didn’t look. He learned so much too. His dad taught him how to use a hammer, all the power tools, and how to wire electricity.

He helped his dad figure out all the materials and supplies they needed to build the barn and then Jim had Seth help him do all the comparison pricing and buying. Seth is really tight with money so he’s a very good shopper. He knows what every inch of that barn is made of and what it cost.

Current Perceptions

Parent Goals

The goals that Mr. and Mrs. McLaughlin had for their children when they first started to home school changed significantly over time. Even though Amy was so nervous about this venture, she says it turned out to be more wonderful than she ever could have imagined.

My academic goals are to get Ellen through college and Seth apprenticed in a garage. Eventually we’d like to help him set up his own shop. Jim could keep his books for him when he retires. I had a turbulent high school adolescence and barely graduated from high
school. I really worried about parenting Ellen and Seth during their teenage years but now I think this has been the happiest and most productive time of my life.

 Personally my goals have really changed a lot. I see my children more as individuals and I want them to be strong Christians. Over the years that has even become more important to me. Not that the academics aren’t important. It’s just that the perspective has changed and their character is just as important, or more so, than their head knowledge. Home schooling also gives us the time we need to teach them to be contributors to the community we live in.

Reflections

When Amy thinks back over the four years they have home schooled, she can’t believe how much their lives have changed. Most of all, she can’t believe how much she has changed.

The kids are so content. Our family is so close and the kids are thriving. Seth has a much better self image. The best part of this experience has been how our relationships have developed. Ellen and I have never been closer and I think we would have lost so much if I had not kept her at home. And Seth is so close to his dad. The sun rises and sets on him and they are inseparable when Jim is home. The kids often tell people how much they love home schooling. And when people ask them if they wouldn’t like to go back to school, they ask, “Why would we?”
Excepts from Field Notes

Labor Day Week-End

Hot, 87 Degrees

Franklin County Fairgrounds

Ellen is showing her horse, TC, this afternoon. It’s the 14th show she’s been in this summer and sometimes she does real well and sometimes not. TC is a beautiful brown Morgan, ten years old. He’s for sale now because Ellen needs a ‘better’ horse but it’s obvious she cares for him a lot. Today Ellen placed second out of nine and everyone is ecstatic. She showed in the Novice Pleasure Morgan class and was all dressed up in her three piece pinstripe suit with gold clasps and earrings and lots of make-up!

When I arrived she was carefully applying her thick blue eye shadow at the stall door with TC looking on. Flies were everywhere and she was sitting on an old cooler that held a few cans of Pepsi and some water. About 300 feet away, just outside the building, Jim, her dad, had parked their car so numerous trips could be made back and forth to deliver Ellen’s riding outfit, the saddle, her boots. The whole family is here and everyone is dressed in their oldest clothes because showing horses is a lot of work.

Jim realizes suddenly that they have forgotten the pitch fork and there’s a lot of manure in the pen. Ellen finishes applying her make-up, listens to the loud speaker, and realizes she has a little time yet. She announces that she’s going out to watch the judging for five minutes, then she’ll be back.
Jim asks what he can do; Amy says he can bring the saddle in from the car. They paid $800 for the saddle. It was used and Ellen had to buy it herself. She oils it regularly to keep it supple. There’s a moment of panic when Amy doesn’t find the bridle (Did they take it home last night?) but then finds it in the second cooler. They had to buy two new straps for this show and they were expensive. The browband, which goes with the bridle, was $25.00. The new girth, which goes under the horse’s belly, was $70.00. Everyone is watching closely so no one walks away with either. Seth is sitting on yet a third cooler, smiling but acting rather bored with the whole process. Mr. McLaughlin walks over to me and says, “There’s a lot of waiting, then a lot of hurrying, then a lot of waiting again.”

Seth reads through The Dispatch. Amy begins to unwrap TC’s tail and brush it out. She comes my way toward the stall door and comments that everyone’s really tired. The Ohio State Fair, where they actually stayed for five days last week, really knocked them out. Ellen earned several ribbons while they were there in both the equestrian and pleasure classes. One was a third place award for an equestrian championship medal that she was particularly proud of.

Jim asks if there’s anything he can do. He checks the schedule again and says they better start “getting ready.” Ellen returns, gets her outfit out of the car and disappears for ten minutes. Returning, with cuffs rolled up and nearly ready, she sits down to put on her boots. Seth helps his mom finish brushing TC and getting the final sawdust from the floor out of his mane. They begin to saddle and bridle him (Field Notes, 9/5/98).
At the McLaughlin Home

Amy tells me that Seth has anxiously been anticipating the arrival of the springs for the Honda. One box arrived (finally!) on Friday but not the second one. Seth was so upset he insisted that his mom call the post office to find out where the other box was. But she wouldn’t. She said she had spent a month last year trying to teach him how to use the phone book and she decided this would be a great opportunity for him to problem solve.

Seth got mad at his mom; then enlisted his sister, Ellen, to help. She assisted him a little by telling him how to find the number, but she wouldn’t do it for him. Finally, he found the number. Then he wanted Ellen to call, but she wouldn’t. So he did.

Amy said it was a riot listening to him describe the box to the mail carrier and insisting that it must be there. After all, they had already received the first one!

Monday, the mail carrier actually rang the doorbell and asked for Seth. He wanted to hand deliver the precious package. He said, “I understand there’s someone here who’s looking for this...!”

Seth was elated! (Field Notes, 10/21/98)

Many of the same patterns that were evident in the other study families were also evident in the McLaughlin family. Family relationships became stronger each year and the children enjoyed being home very soon after they started home schooling. In spite of the difficult circumstances of the first year with the family being split up, they still had what Amy called a “successful year”
academically. Amy gained a lot of knowledge about curriculum and the specific learning styles of her children also.

She made many academic adjustments the second year and concentrated on Seth's weaknesses. By the third year, however, she decided that she needed to expand what she was doing and let Seth spend more time with subjects he could understand.

Her role as a parent/teacher also changed. At first Amy did all the teaching, but by year two she was confident that Ellen could do most of her own work. That freed Amy up to spend most of her time with Seth doing the explicit teaching. By year three Amy was doing a lot more facilitating and seeking out community opportunities to supplement her children's education.
Similarities and Differences
Among the
Three Case Studies

The case studies in stage two provide a detailed description of how the family relationships, the selection and implementation of curriculum, and the parental role shifted over time in these three families. Even though there were similarities and differences among the families, overall, the patterns that emerged were consistent with the findings of the larger group.

Similarities
Family Relationships
Both the Davis family and the Murray family had an extremely emotional and difficult start to their home school experiences which made establishing new family routines very difficult. The Davis’ were the happy recipients of an unexpected [adopted] baby boy, and the Murray’s lost their seven month old son to a kidney disease.

Two of the families, the Davis’ and the McLaughlin’s, pulled their children out of school. Neither family had difficulty establishing themselves as teachers with their children. All three families said that the most rewarding aspect of home schooling during the first year was the close family relationships that developed.

None of these families made comments about becoming a cooperative unit for work and play during year number two. The Davis’ were dealing with a new baby that was very active and difficult to manage; Amy McLaughlin
was anxiously trying to find a good curriculum match for her son, Seth, while her daughter, Ellen, worked independently; the Murray family had enrolled their oldest daughter in a satellite program that was labor intensive and difficult to use.

By year number three the families started looking similar again. Each had established a regular routine and each said they had a flexible but structured schedule that characterized their days. They were all settling into a more comfortable 'life style' that was dictated by the needs and preferences of their family, and all said that by the end of this year they were homeschooling for ideological reasons, in spite of the fact that only one of the family's, the Murray's, had begun to home school for this reason. All the families say that their close family relationships are very important.

**Curriculum**

Neither the Davis' or the McLaughlin's used a correspondence or satellite school. All of the families selected at least some materials the first year and every subsequent year from catalogs, magazines, conventions, or book sales. All the families made dramatic changes in curriculum year number two, and two of the families, the Davis' and the Murray's, made dramatic changes year number three as well. By the end of the third year, however, all three families had found curriculum they liked. Reading was still a problem in the Davis and Murray families, but by year four, the children were beginning to show vast improvement in both attitude and ability. Now the families report that all of their children love to read.
All three of the families say that their children use their free time constructively and all three mothers made comments specifically about how much they have personally learned and continue to learn by home schooling their children.

Curriculum Implementation

Two of the mothers, Mrs. McLaughlin and Mrs. Murray, were extremely anxious about their ability to teach. Both mothers said that curriculum implementation was very difficult. Mrs. Davis, who was an experienced elementary teacher, also found curriculum implementation very difficult, but it was because her son was so unusual in his learning style that she had difficulty finding curriculum that was a good match.

All three parents concentrated on the academic weaknesses of their children year number two. Mrs. Davis was spending vast amounts of time teaching Greg reading and math; Mrs. Murray was working hard on reading with Elizabeth, and Mrs. McLaughlin was struggling with math and language with Seth. Two of the families, the McLaughlin’s and the Murray’s, were actively participating in support group activities the second year.

The third year found the children in all three families much more independent and self-reliant. The mother’s were giving their children opportunities to participate in the curriculum selection, and all of them were depending heavily on conversation and dialogue during the implementation process.

All the families were socially active, and two of the families, the McLaughlin’s and the Murray’s, were very active helping with the support group activity days. Their oldest daughters were also volunteering.
Parental Role

All three of these families went through the teacher cycle of transformation. Each had to adjust to being their children's parent and teacher. All of them did excessive amounts of explicit teaching during year two, and all of them eventually moved into the role of parent as facilitator and partner.

Differences

Families

Murray. Home schooling nine years; three girls, ages 4, 12, 14
Davis. Home schooling six years; two boys, ages 5, 15
McLaughlin. Home schooling four years; one girl, 16; one boy, 14

Reason They Decided to Home School

Murray. Ideological Decision
Davis. Academic Decision
McLaughlin. Social Decision

When They Started

Murray. Before oldest daughter entered Kindergarten
Davis. Summer before son entered third grade
McLaughlin. Mid year: son in fourth grade and daughter in sixth
Family Relationships

**Murray.** The Murray family is composed of three girls. Even though there is an age span of ten years between the oldest and the youngest, the girls do many things together. The four year old adores her older sisters and they spend a lot of time with her reading and playing. Recently, Mrs. Murray put the middle daughter in charge of teaching Mary the alphabet and the two can often be found giggling on the floor in the living room playing with the magnetic letters. Mrs. Murray is pleased that her family is close and has commented that she believes they have avoided a lot of negative behavior and attitudes since her children spend more time with the family than with peers. Both the older girls are popular babysitters in the neighborhood.

**Davis.** The Davis family has two sons. Because of the nine year age span between the boys, they have different interests and different friends. The younger son goes to Kindergarten every day. When he is home, he constantly follows his older brother around and wants to do everything that he does. Mrs. Davis encourages Greg to get his 'book work' done in the morning because he can concentrate better in a quiet house. Mrs. Davis says that the relationship she and her husband have developed with their older son as a result of home schooling has been the most rewarding part of home education.

**McLaughlin.** The McLaughlin family is also close though the interests of Ellen and Seth are very different. Ellen spends a great deal of time with her mom because they are both so interested in the horses. Seth spends the majority of his time with his dad because they enjoy mechanical and
construction projects. Mrs. McLaughlin says that she dreaded the teen years because they were so traumatic for her but that her children’s teen years have been the most productive and happy of her life.

**School Room and Routine**

**Murray.** This family has school every morning. They have converted a dining room into a school room and everyone sits at a table that is centered in the room. The computer is on a desk between the two windows and the piano is on the outside wall. There are book shelves all around the room and another desk in the corner where Mom keeps the lesson plan books and special items for school. The answering machine is on and outside diversions are kept to a minimum. Sometimes one of the girls will leave the school area for a short period of time to read on the back porch or on the couch in the living room. Occasionally they will go to their bedroom to read but school takes place primarily in the school room. Lesson plans are done monthly and the girls record what they do every day. Afternoons are busy with extracurricular activities, Spanish lessons, and volunteer commitments.

**Davis.** This family reluctantly decided to home school because their oldest son was falling behind in reading and math. He is ADD and has some unusual learning styles and it took approximately three years before he could function independently at grade level. He is also very gifted in art.

Every morning, before school, Greg works out with his body building equipment which he has set up in the basement. His art materials are also there and he always has about four projects in process. Currently he is doing wood sculpting and an oil painting on a very large, tri-panel canvas. He is planning on entering these projects in a state competition late spring.
Greg is expected to be at the kitchen table or on the couch doing his assignments by 9:00 every morning. His lessons are written out a week in advance and he checks them off when they are complete. He is an auditory learner and very verbal and enjoys having his mom around when he is doing his written assignments. He often interrupts something he is doing to make a comment or to ask a question. Usually Mrs. Davis sits down with him for an hour or two and they read through part of his social studies or science assignment together. Greg likes the interaction, and being able to talk about the new material helps him understand and organize it better. Then he answers the questions at the end of the chapter or unit by himself.

Greg does his math with a video program. The television is in an upstairs office so he disappears for 30 to 45 minutes every morning to do his lesson. He also has a writing assignment daily which his mom reads over and critiques. He is responsible for the final copy. Greg likes this particular writing program and has shown great improvement over the last six months.

After his written assignments are complete, Greg spends his afternoons with neighborhood friends, doing computer programs (i.e. Math Blaster, Typing Tutor), reading science fiction novels or biographies, working on art projects, swimming at the local indoor pool, or taking pictures with the new professional camera his dad just purchased for him. The family gets together frequently with other home schoolers to go on field trips or just visit. Now that he is in high school, the family is working toward some kind of diploma so that Greg can pursue either an art degree or a technical vocation.

McLaughlin. This family does school in a much less structured way. Seth gets up very early and watches the Farm Report or CNN News. He has his school work done by 10:00 and then is out in the garage or in the
basement working on current projects he and his father are doing. He is very active and is constantly working on his car or his dad’s truck. Mrs. McLaughlin has all his assignments written out a week in advance and Seth must get all of the daily assignments done or he is not allowed to go out in the garage. Often Seth will do school work all day Monday and Tuesday so that he can have the rest of the week free. Mr. McLaughlin checks Seth’s work with him two or three evenings a week.

Ellen gets up around 8:00 and immediately goes to the barn to feed the animals. Then she does her math and chemistry in her bedroom or at the dining room table. After fixing lunch, she spends the afternoon in the barn exercising and caring for her horses. She lifeguards and teaches swimming two afternoons a week at the YMCA and Friday mornings she and her mom go to Plain City for horseback riding lessons. Ellen has completed all her high school requirements for history and English and will be taking the ACT this fall. She wants to begin classes at Columbus State as soon as she turns eighteen. Her dad checks her math and chemistry two or three nights a week after dinner.

**Mother’s Role**

*Murray.* Mom is either at the school table explaining or checking an assignment or only a few feet away in the kitchen doing domestic chores or caring for the preschooler. She is very attentive and busy with school plans or on the computer ordering books in advance of an upcoming topic while the older girls are working independently.

Intermittently one of the girls may have a question or need clarification of an assignment and mom is available. On Thursday’s the week’s lessons
are thoroughly checked with each daughter and Mrs. Murray sits with each
daughter asking questions and making sure the material has been learned.
Because of the girls' ages and the type of curriculum they have chosen,
mom's role alternates between being a teacher, a resource person, and a
facilitator (organizing events, opportunities, and transportation). Both girls
have a lesson plan book which they check off when an assignment is done.

Davis. This mother has continued to do a considerable amount of
explicit teaching over the years because her son had so many learning
idiosyncrasies. It took a long time to find materials and methods that were
productive and user friendly. Greg has finally developed enough self-
confidence and knowledge to be independent and the family is feeling very
encouraged that he has made so much progress. Mom checks his work
either daily or every other day. They are currently applying to the technical
program for juniors and seniors in his local high school.

McLaughlin. Mom was the primary teacher for the first two years the
children were home schooled. Last year Dad starting taking over because
Ellen's course material got too advanced for Mom and Seth worked better
with his dad. Amy still oversees all the curriculum, finds resources, makes
sure the children do their assignments, and keeps detailed records for their
annual assessments.

Curriculum

Murray. Mrs. Murray has chosen to use curriculum that is primarily
based on library books and good literature. Both girls have a math and
English grammar text, but social studies, science, literature, and language
arts are taught with library resources. Even though the materials allow for a
great deal of choice in activities and selection of materials, each subject is structured and the girls have to do a certain amount of work daily in each area.

**Davis.** Greg uses a text book as his base for social studies and science and Mrs. Davis supplements the information with good literature suggested in bibliographies and other resource material. Math is a video program with daily assignments; creative writing is a popular English curriculum created especially for home school students.

**McLaughlin.** Ellen uses a standard text for math and has a high school chemistry program written by a home school dad who is a chemistry professor at Indiana University. She is an excellent writer and loves opera so the family frequents Columbus Public Library for good literature and videos. Ellen is also an avid reader.

Seth reads anything that is a manual and has diagrams. He also loves computers. Currently he is using a standard business math text, history, and science texts. Writing out answers to questions is still a challenge for him because of his learning disabilities so Amy does a lot of oral discussion with him to make sure he is doing and understanding the reading. Amy and Jim also make a point to include Seth in their household expenditures and financial planning sessions because he understands and enjoys working with real projects and numbers. When Seth took me through the barn they had built two summers ago he could tell me exactly what each board and nail cost and where the cheapest place to buy it had been.
Outside Instruction

**Murray.** Since both parents in this family have high school educations, outside instruction has become important now that their oldest daughter is in high school. Mrs. Murray has a college student tutor Joyce weekly in both algebra and biology. Spanish classes and a debate club are also weekly events via the support group. Both classes are taught by homeschool parents who are certified teachers.

**Davis.** Both parents in the Davis family are certified teachers. Mom is an elementary teacher and Dad teaches secondary English, therefore, teaching academics is not a major concern. Greg takes art lessons from a former Columbus School of Art and Design instructor.

**McLaughlin.** Ellen is taking debate, speech, and Spanish with certified teachers through the local support group. She is also taking horseback riding lessons. Seth is not taking any outside instruction.

Extracurricular Activities

**Murray.** This family is actively involved in music lessons, a drama group, and several sports events including snow skiing, softball, and volleyball. They attend ‘Activity Days’ with a very large support group every Friday where they take a variety of academic and fine arts classes throughout the year.

**Davis.** Besides having weekly art lessons, Greg has participated in many physical education activities through recreation programs offered by the city. He is currently taking wood carving lessons through a local woodworking outlet and he is involved with the church youth group.
McLaughlin. This family is not participating in weekly support group activities because they are so busy with the farm, horseback riding competitions, Ellen's job, and special projects at home. They do, however, have many home school friends and they get together with them several times a month for field trips and special activities that the teenagers enjoy.

Volunteer, Apprenticeships, and Work Activities

Murray. Joyce volunteers regularly at the historical museum and both school age daughters have many volunteer church commitments throughout the year. Both help their dad supervise a Bible Quiz team for elementary age children; both volunteer in the nursery at church; Joyce is a volunteer in her community when there are special events the town sponsors.

Davis. This family does a lot of volunteer activities through their church and in their neighborhood. They also give blood regularly and help at the private school where the youngest son attends Kindergarten.

McLaughlin. Ellen works at the YMCA and has participated in a veterinarian apprenticeship program. Seth is awaiting word from a local mechanic about spending a day a week in his shop as an apprentice.

Parental Learning

Murray. Maureen is excited about all the learning she has done since they began home schooling and she hopes to go to college some day to become a teacher. She reads all the girls' school books, several home schooling publications, and always has a selection of teacher education materials or child development books scattered throughout the house.
Davis. Carol Davis is enjoying the novels they have been reading to supplement the social studies and science texts. She has developed a new love for biographies and historical fiction.

McLaughlin. Amy says she is learning all the things she missed in high school and that home schooling has given them a new appreciation for how much there is to learn in the real world. They try to make everything they do a learning experience and the whole family has learned to enjoy things like opera and theatre.

Similarities and Differences
Between the Case Study Families
and the
Other Fourteen Families

Similarities

The patterns that emerged within the case study families were consistent with the interview families that were discussed in Chapter Four. In each case, family relationships changed and grew stronger over time, the community became an important resource, curriculum was more interest and ability based, and the parental role shifted.

Year One

Mothers had to learn how to be teachers and mothers, and they had to rearrange their daily schedules to accommodate instructional time. It was also a struggle to find a good curriculum match. Several of the families
experienced traumatic circumstances the first year making a smooth transition to this new lifestyle a particularly difficult challenge.

**Year Two**

The second year of instruction was marked by an emphasis on the areas of weakness. This year was characterized by the parents doing a substantial amount of explicit teaching and often by another change in curriculum or instructional approach. There was also a new focus on extracurricular activities. Parents looked for resources and opportunities in the community to make learning more meaningful and fun.

**Year Three**

Year three parents focused on areas of strengths and interests. The parental role changed in that children were now becoming independent and could work more on their own. Parents became facilitators and partners in learning. This was also a year marked by more community participation. Volunteering, apprenticing, and occasionally employment began to be a part of weekly schedules.

**Previous Research**

Patterns were also consistent with various findings of previous researchers. For instance, Reynolds (1985) found that families had a regular daily routine and that the children were often given choices when selecting daily activities. Van Galen (1986) found that many families used traditional teaching methods and materials and that many started out with correspondence schools.
Ray (1988) reported that home schooled children spend an average of three to four hours each day doing formal study and then additional time in individual learning activities. Beaven’s (1990) phenomenological study that took place over a five year period stated that “learning and living cannot be separated” and that learning for these families was based in life experiences.

Mattingly (1990) said that in spite of great variability within the home schools, the “most striking” feature was the demonstrated love and concern each home school parent demonstrated toward their children. He also reported, “...at nearly every research site was a relaxed, supportive, and cooperative atmosphere.”

Parker (1992) found that informality and flexibility characterized these homes. Nicol (1993) examined the pedagogical framework of home school families and stated that they provided a child-centered framework focused on the child’s natural curiosity. Nicol also stated that the pedagogical interactions of home schoolers were “directed toward the personal growth of each child, not the acquisition of content” (54). Cappello (1995) found home school families to be more activity-oriented.

All of these previous findings were apparent in each of the home schools I observed. Families had routines that were flexibly structured around outside activities such as skating lessons and Spanish. Children were included in decisions regarding what curriculum would be used and how they structured their time. All of the children were expected to do a minimum amount of school work daily or weekly, and parents were supportive and affirming. Curriculum selections were made based on children’s interests and abilities, with attention given in all cases to the particular learning styles of each child.
Differences

None of the case study families reported themselves as being a cooperative unit for work and play the second year. Curriculum and family adjustments were still too difficult and each of these families was still in the uphill process of adapting to their particular personal circumstances.

Closing Themes

Chapter Six first discusses how I came to recognize the themes that eventually emerged as the underlying structure of successful home school families. I organized these themes: family relationships, curriculum selection and implementation, and parental role, on a chart called The Cycle of Transformation. Each theme is described according to year one, year two, and year three. Following the cycle of transformation description, there is a discussion about the instructional components that characterized curricular implementation after year three in each of the case study families. Implications and suggestions for further research will conclude the chapter.
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explain the goals, motivations, perceptions, and curricular implementation of home schools from the participant's perspective. I sought to find out why parents decided to home educate initially, what curriculum was used, and how it changed over time. I asked parents what the first year was like, then the second, and the third. I asked them about changes in implementation and goals, and I asked them why they continued, especially when they never wanted to home school in the first place.

Then I went into three of their homes and I sat and watched. What made these families so self-confident, so sure they could educate their children properly and prepare them for college? If education was as important to them as they said, why were they willing to gamble with their children's futures once they got to high school?

All these questions haunted me. Yes, I had home schooled for twelve years. But I sent my children to high school, never assuming that I could provide for them the education they would need for college and beyond. For me it had been fun, an opportunity to spend extra time together, a time to
make memories and build relationships. I was a teacher. I was trained, educated, and experienced.

As I pondered these questions, I spent hours combing through the transcriptions, field notes, and my research journal. Following are excerpts that exemplify some of my observations and confusions and, finally, how patterns began to emerge and to make sense.

Reflections

Field Notes and Research Journal Excerpts

Super Bowl Sunday, January 25, 1998

At a Home Schooler's Dining Room Table

Tonight I spent four hours with three home school families. One was a good friend, the other two were new acquaintances. We spent two hours with my tape recorder on. I was trying out my newly formed interview questions and anxious to get some feedback. My friend told me this would be an interesting evening as these two new families were very different from each other. The questions would probably create some tension and disagreements.

Family number one. Both parents in the Roman family have college degrees. Their five children range from ages six to twenty. They live in a rural area and own several animals including horses, goats, sheep, Angora rabbits, dogs, cats, guinea pigs, and fan-tailed homing pigeons. Mrs. Roman had strongly resisted home schooling because her oldest was mildly retarded and Mrs. Roman felt Jill needed professional instruction. Besides, she liked having her days to herself.
But Jill had not been doing well. Every day she came home in tears; the children were teasing her, throwing her books down, calling her names. She started developing some disturbing coping behaviors and it didn’t seem as though she was making much academic progress either. So the decision was made and the Roman’s brought their three school age children home, but just for a short time until things could get straightened out.

That was eight years ago. Now, every day starts outside, spending the whole morning caring for animals and working around the farm. The children play, bake, sew, and do 4H projects. They try to get some reading and math done every day. Even though this family owns over 1000 books, mostly acquired from garage sales, they have not spent over $50 on curriculum since they began home schooling. They go to the library a few times each month. Mother never instructs, never makes daily lesson plans or keeps yearly records, never gives grades. The children never take standardized tests.

The Romans’ 17 year old son earned a composite score of 29 on his ACT test and was in the 96th percentile. He is currently taking a few classes at a local university, even though technically he is still a high school senior. One of the college professor’s has recently offered him a job running his computer lab.

Family number two. The Kellogg’s are also college graduates. They have three daughters, ages ten, fourteen, and seventeen. Bonnie had her girls in two private schools before she brought them home. They are very bright and Bonnie did not feel they were being academically challenged. She was angry about the thought of home schooling at first because she did
not believe it was her responsibility to teach them. “Besides,” she said, “only right wing fanatics who are isolationists home school.”

That was seven years ago. Now every day is spent with textbooks at home, behind a desk or at the dining room table, answering questions at the end of each chapter, looking at specimens under a microscope, taking tests, or going to skating or tennis lessons. Bonnie spends between $300 and $500 per child per year on curriculum. Last year, however, they bought a new microscope for $1200 and a new computer for $7000, not including the money they spent on educational software.

This family goes on field trips constantly, takes educational vacations, and lives in the city. Bonnie oversees everything the children are studying and is always available to answer questions and assist. She goes to the library nearly every day for resource materials. She makes daily lesson plans, has box fulls of records, and gives grades. Her girls take standardized tests every year.

In November of 1998, Bonnie called to tell me that her oldest daughter had scored in the 98th percentile on the ACT and qualified as a National Merit semi-finalist.

Friday, May 22, 1998

Family Interview

I interviewed the Kelly family today. This is their fourth year and Renee is in the third grade. It was a boring interview. They are doing the same curriculum this year they have done for the last three years. The curriculum is terrible. It’s uninteresting, not age appropriate or user friendly; books were published in the 1960’s. Nothing new, nothing interesting. What I
don't understand is why she likes this curriculum so much and why she isn't thinking about doing something different. Mrs. Kelly is thrilled with her home schooling experience and wants to home school through high school. Her daughter's doing great; she's excited about learning and she loves to read.

Monday, September 21, 1998

Support Group Sponsors a "Veteran's Panel Night" 7:00 pm

'Veteran' father is "raving" about a [horrible] curriculum with a familiar correspondence school. He has home schooled his two middle school children for three years and says, "This is the most fantastic curriculum. My kids are learning so much and they have completely changed. No more problems academically or socially. And I hardly do anything now but check their work. They just do it." Another parent leans over and whispers to me that she used this very same curriculum for a while but couldn't figure out how to use the books and the correspondence school never answered her calls. She gave up and switched to something she thought was more interesting and easier to use.

At the same meeting a first year parent complains how labor intensive the first year is and asks the group, "How do you get the kids to do the work?" That question spurs several comments about how hard the first year is and how no one gets much done academically because it takes so much time to get their kids 'back on tract.' Then they start offering suggestions for dealing with difficult attitudes, laziness, and inappropriate school materials that are either too hard or not interesting.

Researcher notes from this meeting. I am thinking back to how frustrated parents seem to be after the first year when I do their assessments;
how worried they are about not having enough academic work done but always assuring me that this year is going to be VERY different! They often follow up by showing me all the ‘new’ material they have purchased at the convention or through the catalogs and telling me exactly what they are going to do this year because they know their children so much better.

Monday, October 5, 1998

Debate Club Meeting

During the break I have a casual conversation with a home school dad I have known slightly for several years. Our conversation is a bit strained. He hasn’t seen me lately and he knows I am no longer home schooling. He wonders why I am here.

“Hi, Karen.”

“Hi, Randy.”

“How are you doing?”

“Fine.”

Randy: “Why are you here?” I respond that I am doing research on the curriculum in home school families, and that I am with one of my case study children tonight.

Randy: “What are you ‘finding?’”

Karen: “One of the things I think I will find is that families move from a structured approach to a unit approach over time.” He gives me a strange look.

Randy: “Why would you think that?”

Karen: “Well, I think that a lot of my assessment families do that.”

Randy: “They do?” I nod.
He responds, “Maybe your personality as an assessor just draws those people to you....”

**Wednesday, November 18, 1998**

**Researcher Journal**

Question: If it isn’t the curriculum, is it the environment? I got out some material on an integrated teaching and learning model tonight and started looking at the components. I am thinking a lot about the interaction and response elements in these case studies I am doing right now. There is so much talking going on in these families *all the time*.

**Friday, January 8, 1999**

**Researcher Journal**

The interactions! The key is the interactions! It’s the interactions that are different. Parents are asking more *questions* than giving answers. It’s all over my field notes. Every single family. It’s *the way* they are teaching, not *what* they are teaching! Lots of days Maureen didn’t ‘teach’ at all; she just responded with comments and questions. But she always knew exactly what they were doing, and the kids knew what they had to get done and when.

**Sunday, January 24, 1999**

**Researcher Journal**

*On the plane coming home from Raleigh, NC*

Finding patterns and categories but no overriding themes. Going through all my loose notes that I have kept in a folder since the study began, and BINGO! It was the family relationships and the parent/teacher role that
had changed. It's the way they are responding to their children, the way they are choosing curriculum, the way they are scheduling their days.

At the beginning I thought that maybe they were making good curriculum decisions but they weren't necessarily doing so. Neither was there a consistent pattern about unit studies. Most seem to be satisfied with the curriculum no matter what they were using - after year two.

**Finding.** The children are helping to make a lot of the decisions. The real story is what is happening when the textbooks are closed, IF they are using textbooks at all. School time and 'life' activities are so integrated that they are difficult to separate. It isn't 'what' the families are using or learning; it is the relationships, the choices that are interest based with child input, the way the parents are responding and interacting with their children, and what they are doing in the community to supplement their school work.

Generally speaking, after the third year, parents are facilitating - not teaching. The children are helping to make many decisions; lessons are primarily interest based. Choice and ability level is respected; parents are making accommodation for special needs or learning disabilities if necessary. Parents want their children to be a part of the process and to become independent thinkers and learners.

**Education as a Way of Life**

**An Integrated Model of Living and Learning**

When I realized that I could not focus solely on the curriculum, I discovered the themes across each case study: the family relationships, the curriculum selection and implementation, and the parental role. By the
time I was analyzing the third case study family, I was confirming the patterns and realized I was looking at a different model of living and learning.

Then I looked at the interviews again and saw how the parents were functioning each subsequent year. The answer seemed to be in how they interacted with their children, how they implemented the curriculum, how and to what extent they used community resources. It wasn’t which curriculum they were using, it was how they were implementing it. This was especially true for children who had special needs, which raises the question about how effective parents can be without professional assistance if learning problems are severe.

Past research. Then I started to understand. That’s why the research was saying that there was no correlation between the level of the parents’ education and the children’s scores on standardized tests. Neither was there a correlation between the family’s income and the children’s test scores. That is also why fewer families are putting their children back in school. Parents do not think they need to know everything that their children study or learn. They see themselves as providers of opportunities, encouragers, overseers, and partners in the process of education. Living and learning are co-existent; home schooling is a lifestyle.

Once the children have experienced this sociocultural learning model, they resist going back to the transmission model most often used in schools. The children crave the interaction they are getting from their parents, from each other, and from their community participation. They thrive on the constant activity provided in support groups and outside activities.
The Cycle of Transformation in Home School Families

There was a three to four year cycle that emerged from the interview data and that was confirmed in the case studies. The three main themes that provided the underlying structure within these families were the family relationships, curriculum selection and implementation, and the role of the parent/teacher. Each theme was marked by a shift in growth each consecutive year (See Figure 6.1).

Family Relationships

The first theme, family relationships, evolved over time. At the beginning parents are overwhelmed by the increased responsibilities and commitments of trying to be both parent and teacher. Children are not always responsive initially and parents need the children to help more because there is so much added responsibility with everyone home all the time. Eventually the families learn to study, work, and play together and they become a community of learners.

Building parent/child and sibling relationships. The first year is difficult because mothers are learning to be teachers and they are not used to scheduling school work around domestic responsibilities. Parents who bring their children home from school sometimes find they have to teach their children to be more helpful and to be on a schedule at home. Sibling relationships are also sometimes strained because the children are not used to being together so much without their usual friends.
Figure 6.1 The Cycle of Transformation in Home School Families

Adapted from Miles & Huberman 1994 p20
**Family as a community of learners.** The second year is marked by much more camaraderie between the parent and child and the siblings. Parents are finding exciting places to go, good books to read, and interesting things to study. Often the family will join a support group this year and participate on a regular basis with other families who are home schooling. Parents are trying to make learning fun and using community resources in new and exciting ways.

**Family as a community of learners in the community.** The third year the family is not only reaching out to use their community but they are contributing also. Often parents are teaching classes in a support group setting, planning field trips, or creating special learning opportunities for their own children and others. Children are beginning to take advantage of volunteer and apprenticeship programs on a regular basis and looking for areas to serve, either in their community or in their church.

**Families focus on character and values.** The fourth year is marked by another shift in perspective and focus. Parents and children have adapted to this new living and learning life style and curriculum and life almost seem inseparable. Families are strong and close and the underlying structure that emerges is built on character and commitment. Families function as a unit and children are often included in important family decisions.

**Curriculum Selection and Implementation**

The second major theme that emerged was curriculum selection and implementation. Interestingly, there were no patterns to curriculum selection or approach. Some families used text books, some library books, some computer programs. Many used a conglomeration of all of these. What
became obvious, however, was how the parents chose to implement and
supplement the basic academic program.

Correspondence schools, catalogs, and library books. The first year
parents used many different curriculums and approaches to instruction. It
was a year marked with frustration and anxiety. It was not unusual for
parents to express regret about not getting very much done academically.
They often spent a great deal of money on correspondence schools or
materials that were not well suited to their children's needs or learning styles.

Catalogs, library books, community resources. The second year was
much better academically in that parents usually had a curriculum that was
more appropriate. None of the families in this study used a correspondence
or satellite school for more than one year and all the families were much
happier and felt more productive when they could personally select the
materials they wanted to use. Additionally, families were finding
extracurricular activities to supplement their children's educational needs
and to make learning more enjoyable.

Catalogs, library, community resources, and personal participation.
By the third year the families not only had curriculum they liked, but the
children were much more independent using the material. Extracurricular
activities continued and often children were beginning to volunteer and
apprentice in areas of special interest.

Focus on long term goals, college, and occupational skills. Once
families made it through year three, life style learning was in place and
families no longer considered sending their children back to school. When
children were nearing high school age, parents had to decide whether or not
they were going to home school all the way through high school because
many public school systems will not allow a home schooler to enter high school midstream. Therefore, depending on the ages of their children, the focus at this time begins to change and parents have to think seriously about career goals and post high school options. Tutors, apprenticeships, life skills, and work became paramount and families focus with a new intensity on community resources that will provide educational opportunities for their children.

**Curriculum Implementation the Third Year and Beyond**

There were several components of implementation that were evident in each of the case study homes regardless of the curriculum that was being used. Each of the families had home schooled for an extended period of time and this sociocultural model appeared to be a natural outgrowth of their living and learning life style.

**Response and interaction.** These are the cornerstones of the environment. Lessons are full of conversation, the books children are reading are topics at meal time, questions and conversations are ongoing between parents and children, and siblings. Blocks of time change as needed, topics are fluid, unexpected opportunities are taken advantage of, and children’s interests and attention spans are honored. Parents constantly model and demonstrate. They keep showing, telling, helping, responding, and encouraging.

**Choice.** This is a recurrent theme among the families. Children are consulted for decisions regarding curricular topics, methods, and depth of study.
A relaxed structure. Amidst all the activity there is a relaxed structure to the days and weeks. The children know what the schedule is, what needs to be done, and what is expected of them. If valuable opportunities occur, flexibility prevails, but always they come back to their routine when the event passes.

Linda Baldwin was late for our interview because "...the strawberries were ready."

Janet Roman told me, "Phil came home from work early and we watched the baby pigeons hatch all day."

Carol Davis apologized for Greg not being at home the day I came to do the interview. "Greg’s not here today because he just got his first job cutting grass."

Blocks of time. Children are given large blocks of time in which to finish projects and pursue interests. The days are not characterized by short periods or interruptions in order to move on to the next topic. Older children are also given the option of doing their work in whatever sequence they choose. The only rule is, “Make sure it gets done by a certain time.”

Parents say that by giving their children time to explore and become immersed in special interests they develop hobbies and skills that often culminate in serious study.

Community involvement. Families are very community minded. Many of the children have projects or interests in which they invest significant amounts of time either involved in other people’s lives or learning life skills that parents believe will be important to them later as adults.
Parental Role

The third theme, parental role, also changed over time. There were four distinct stages in the Cycle of Transformation that took place over a three to four year period, depending on the age of the children.

Parent as parent. Parents often describe the first year as one of struggle and frustration. They are learning how to be both parent and teacher, and are getting used to instruction manuals, curriculum language, lesson plans, and schedules that must accommodate domestic as well as academic responsibilities. For parents who have brought their children home, there is sometimes a need to reestablish themselves as an authority figure who is also capable of teaching.

Parent as teacher. The second year is often characterized by explicit teaching. Parents are becoming more familiar with curriculum and they know what their children do and do not know academically. They concentrate on catching their children up in some area of weakness or introducing them to a new area they believe is important. It is often at this time that parents become aware of their children's limitations or learning disabilities with a new understanding. Also, children have to be taught how to work independently, read directions, and complete assignments on their own.

Parent as facilitator. The third year parents begin to focus on areas of interests and strengths. Instead of concentrating on what their children can not do, they encourage independence and love of learning by finding materials that are easier to use, interest based, and better matched to the child's ability. Parents act more as facilitators by providing materials and community resources that will be most beneficial. Parents are discovering the value of student input and choice.
Cognitive development occurs in socioculturally organized activities in which children are active in learning and in managing their social partners, and their partners are active in structuring situations that provide children with access to observe and participate in culturally valued skills and perspectives (Rogoff, 1990: 370).

**Parent as partner.** By the fourth year parents and children are comfortable with the living and learning lifestyle. Parents discuss curriculum, implementation, activities, community resources, and goals with their children. By this time many of the students have outside academic and social commitments and scheduling has to be done carefully.

**Implications**

**From the Parent's Point of View**

The purpose of this study was to present home schooling from the parents' perspective. They are home schooling longer because they believe their children are developing strong character and values. Parents believe their children are becoming productive adults who can manage their time and energy responsibly. The children like to home school because they have many friends, interesting books and topics of study, and time to do activities that interest them (horses, art, volunteer, travel, work).

Parents are enjoying the relationships they have with their children and the burden of negative peer pressure is largely lifted. Parents feel that the friendships they are now forming with their children will last a lifetime.

Schedules are flexible. Parents are not bound to someone else's time constraints or priorities for their children or their families. They feel they have more control over their family's personal time, which they value and treasure.
Lastly, parents believe their children are doing well academically. They can monitor their children’s time and school work on an on-going basis. If there is something their child does not understand, they can address the problem immediately. Parents can help their children make career choices and provide opportunities for them at home and in the community that will move them toward productive futures and independence.

**From an Outsider’s Point of View**

Even though home schooling parents see this model of living and learning as effective for their children and their families, it raises many questions in a society that is committed to educating citizens that will be able to function effectively and sensitively in an increasingly more diverse culture.

**Some concerns and limitations.** Because these children are raised in an environment that is comfortable and familiar, will they be able to assimilate smoothly and productively into a society that reflects many diverse cultures and alternate worldviews?

Testing and deadlines are a normal part of every high school students’ experience. Would home school children be able to function efficiently if schedules or exams could not be adapted to meet their individual needs? How will they do if they go to college and test taking is the only mode of evaluation?

If all learning is interest based, are these children getting a well rounded education? Do they know their full potential? Are the children being exposed to areas that would compliment their natural abilities? Do they have a sufficient amount of academic options available to them?
Since parents do not have other children to compare their own children to and since most are not professional educators, how do they know when they are pushing their children too hard or not hard enough? Can parents be good judges of what is adequate for each grade level, and what is too much developmentally? It is difficult to answer these questions because we do not have comprehensive information about all children who are being home schooled, only those who are able and willing to take standardized tests.

The largest and most recent academic and demographic survey by Rudner (1998) included 20,760 K-12 home schooled children in 11,930 families. This report suggests that “home school students do quite well” but he clearly states that comparing this testing data to students who are in public or private school “would be fraught with problems.” Home schoolers are taught one-on-one, and public school classrooms have a student to teacher ratio of 1:20 or higher. Classrooms also have children with multiple abilities and backgrounds and curriculum cannot be individually adapted to each child daily.

If mothers are the primary teachers, what happens if she becomes ill or unavailable and can no longer continue to oversee the learning process? Can these children assimilate easily into a structured, non-individualized learning environment where several children are being taught at the same time?

What about future employment? Can home schoolers function effectively when they have deadlines to meet and non-negotiable rules to follow? How will they handle a structured day that is dictated by an employer?
Do home school students appreciate higher education? In the case of children whose parents only have high school educations, do they understand the need to further their own educations? Do they have the resources and the information needed to pursue higher education?

If parents have a limited education themselves, does this make them too curriculum dependent? What about parents who have children that are hard to teach or have reading problems?

What might be lost to students who do not have an opportunity to attend high school? Certainly friendships are limited and many learning opportunities are not available to individuals on their own.

Home schooled children only have a few teachers; is there merit to learning how to interact with several different teachers who are each specialists in their field?

Further Research Questions

No research has been done that gives us information about families who home school for a short period of time and then send their children back to school. What motivates them to begin and why do they stop? Why are some parents successful and others not?

How do children who have home schooled for elementary school assimilate back into the high school environment? How successful are they academically? Do they make friends easily? Do they enjoy the experience?

Are there situations in home school families that do not get resolved? How do families who do not have a support system in place deal with academic problems or difficult teenagers?
Based on my own limited experience and the case studies that were done for this project, it seems that there is an unusually high representation of families who are home schooling because their children have special learning needs. How do parents who have special needs children adapt their home schools and learning materials? Do they develop their own curriculum or do they use what is commercially available? How successful are they? What do their daily schedules look like? How do they implement their curriculum? What community resources do they use?

In communities that allow home schoolers to participate on a limited basis in the public high schools, how is the administration merging the two communities and how effective is it? Are the home school students assimilating well even though they are only in the schools on a part time basis? What classes are the home schoolers requesting? How are the regular high schoolers responding to the home schoolers?

How do we, as professional educators, address home school families that are committed to this living and learning life style but want an opportunity to participate in some local school programs? Could it be advantageous for both to combine resources and help each other be more effective?

Even though fifteen of the families in this study (88 percent) claimed a Christian ideological worldview, only one family home schooled initially for ideological reasons. It would be interesting to study several families that begin home schooling for ideological reasons and see whether they experience the same transitions and shifts in family relationships, curriculum selection and implementation, and parental roles that these families did.
Advice to Home School Parents from a Former Insider

High school students, particularly, need wide exposure to many fields of study. Parents would be well advised to seek out different areas of learning, and to provide their children with classical literature, information, and experiences that are not commonly studied at the high school level. Many different apprenticeships could be experienced, and all children should have an opportunity to learn a technical skill. Home school high schoolers have the time to develop abilities in many different areas, and in doing so, are providing themselves with more choices and options for further study.

Even though parents appear to be doing a good job at providing their young people with educational experiences, they must be particularly assertive and conscientious about providing the necessary tools high school students need to pursue higher education, especially in the areas of science and math. Tutoring, computer programs, or self instruction manuals should be sought out and used on a regular basis. Foreign language is an area that can be studied when children are in elementary school. Parents would be wise to pursue studies in this area with young children, making the process much easier as they become older.

Test taking abilities are vitally important for college bound students or those who will seek employment after high school. For many of these young people, the scores they receive on the ACT or SAT tests will dramatically effect their options for higher education. Parents must provide ample opportunity for their older students to take tests and to function in a structured and timed environment. They must start doing this soon enough that the high schoolers will have several chances, if necessary, to take the tests again or to obtain tutoring help in areas that need more work.
Today’s children need to be computer literate. Parents should take advantage of community resources that help in this area. Post high school options need to be explored early and families should visit colleges and talk to admissions personnel about entrance requirements. Planning ahead is important. Parents should negotiate with college counselors to see what they are willing to accept without a regular high school diploma.

If a child is not reading fluently by the middle of first grade, parents need to seek a professional evaluation and support materials that are more appropriate for their child’s learning needs. Given the complexity of some reading disabilities, professional expertise is often critical for success.

Parents who have children who are not able to take standardized tests need to consider other assessment or evaluation options with trained professionals who can help them plan more effective instructional programs.

Parents naturally intercede for their children when situations occur that are uncomfortable or difficult. Home school parents must be careful not to allow their children to become too dependent on them to resolve situations that might prove to be valuable learning opportunities. Children need to be allowed to make mistakes and have natural consequences occur, especially when they are within the safe confines of their homes.

New Directions

This study explored the curricular implementation of families that had home schooled for a minimum of three years. Most of the families had home schooled for much longer, and 71 percent (12 families) had children that were currently in high school. Upon examination, three themes emerged which evolved over time to create and provide the underlying structure.
necessary for a long term and successful home school experience. These key areas were family relationships, curricular implementation with a focus on the community, and the role of the parent.

**Warm relationships.** Establishing a warm and respectful relationship with their children was primary to the development and effective functioning of the curriculum implementation and parental role areas. Sometimes it took parents a full year to feel as though they had regained their place of authority in the home and they admitted that very little academic work was accomplished when this was the case. Once they had reestablished this relationship, home schooling was much easier and they accomplished more academically.

**The role of the parent/teacher.** Explicit teaching was also an early task that parents found necessary. Children had to learn how to learn, and they had to be taught how to be responsible for their own learning. This was a grueling time for many families, and those parents I currently talk to that are experiencing this transitional activity seem to be at the peak of their frustration levels. This also seems to be the most labor intensive and exhausting segment of the home school experience. This is a time when trained educators can be very helpful and parents should seek out professional help to make optimum learning available to their children.

Further research needs to be done regarding the student/teacher relationship and the role of the teacher in the classroom. Children and teachers need to know each other well in order to make the learning experience most effective. Children also need to have comprehensive, knowledgeable, and specific instruction in reading. Learning should be interest based and some choice is desirable, but at the early levels when
foundational concepts must be understood, the primary role of the teacher should be to build relationships and to give explicit instruction.

Once parents have accomplished these early tasks of building relationships and teaching foundational concepts, the home schooling experience becomes much easier. Children feel more self-confident and want to be more independent. That is when the teacher role transitions to facilitator and partner. Parent/teachers are still heavily involved in the educational process, but their role is much different. Now they guide, encourage, provide resources, and oversee. When this is occurring, children need to work at their instructional levels, have opportunities to interact with each other and their teachers, have large blocks of time in which to study and create, be allowed to choose interesting topics, take advantage of community resources, and be responsible for at least some of their own learning.

How I Have Changed as a Result of This Experience

Doing home school assessments is going to be a different experience this year. As I thought about how my interactions with the parents would change as a result of this study, I realized that I had shifted my thinking in several areas.

Rather than being an advocate of a particular curriculum or method of instruction I have come to believe that parents that have good relationships with their children can teach with just about any curriculum or method that works for them. My first question during assessments this year will no longer be, "What materials are you using?" but, "Is whatever you have working for you?" Then I will ask, "Why do you think it is working?"
The next question will be, “How long have you been home schooling?” Discovering their year in the cycle of transformation will immediately give me a reference point. My questions and answers will have a more informed and defined context from which I can offer more useful direction. For instance, if a parent is feeling overwhelmed after the first year because of the many curriculum choices available and their children’s weak areas, I will ask questions about their children’s strength’s and interests and encourage them to use materials that not only address areas of need but also areas that will be more fun.

I will also be more supportive and less skeptical of parents who are home schooling high schoolers. I will ask them more questions about community involvement, apprenticeship, and work experiences. I will ask them how they schedule their days and find out what other experiences or community resources they are using to supplement their children’s learning. I will encourage them to pursue post high school options early to find out what requirements will be expected. I will also discuss test taking and encourage them to provide structured and timed opportunities for their children before they send them for the tests that really count.

I will be more available to offer workshops in reading disabilities, curriculum development, and other areas where parents need help and guidance in planning their children’s programs. I will share this model of living and learning, particularly the components that I saw working so effectively in the case studies, with other home schoolers who are struggling to make their experience a successful one.

Lastly, I will share the Cycle of Transformation that other home schoolers have experienced regarding family relationships, curriculum
selection and implementation, and parental roles. This will encourage them to continue when the task seems most difficult and may also help mothers circumvent some of the mistakes others have made, making their home school journey more efficient and less painful.

I have been affected by this study more than I can measure or appreciate. I have a newfound respect for the struggle parents go through when they decide to home school their children, especially when they have no educational background or experience from which to draw. I feel responsible as an educator to make more professional knowledge available to parents who care so much and who are willing to work so hard to help their children fit into a society that, for whatever reason, has been unkind, unreceptive, or unable to help their children. I was shocked to find out how many of these families did not want to home school and how helpless and insecure they felt when they finally did make the desperate decision to bring their children home. I was fascinated when I heard how hard their journeys had been, and I constantly wondered why they had continued.

This study also makes me feel more determined than ever to find answers for these children in the classrooms of our schools. Parents need assistance and we need the parents who have the courage and determination to help their children succeed. Somehow, we must tap into their knowledge and energy to help change a system that is failing so many. Together, professional educators and parents can find solutions and methods of instruction that work for all children.
APPENDICES
ADULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Opening statement: During the course of this interview, I will be asking you about why you decided to home school and about the curriculum you have used over the years. I will be asking you to think back, and remember what it was like when you first started and then how your curriculum and instruction has changed, if it has, in the last few years.

This information is for my dissertation, but more than that, it is to help the educational community at large try to understand what it is about home schooling that makes it so successful for so many families. The purpose of the interview is to get your insights about how home schooling works and how it affects kids.

The interview will be taped and then transcribed by someone who has agreed to do this for me. Your names will be changed in the printed documents, and only I will have access to the original tapes. If you decide that there is anything during the interview that you want taken out, just let me know and I will make sure that it is.

This first set of questions is about your own personal background and experiences. The purpose of these background questions is to help us find out how different kinds of people have come to the decision to home school their children.

1. How long have you been home schooling?
2. What was it about home schooling that attracted you to it?
3. What were your goals and objectives when you started?
4. What was your biggest concern?

5. How old were your children?

6. I am interested in learning more about you as a person and your personal involvement in home schooling. What is it about you - your situation, your personality, your desires, whatever - what is it about you that you think led you to become a home schooler?

7. In most decisions we make there are other people who have some influence on what we do. In terms of your participation in home schooling, what other people played a role in your joining the ranks?

8. When you made this decision to home school and finally brought your children home (or started the actual instruction) how did you believe that children learn best?

9. How long did you intend to home school when you started?

10. Describe how your first year went. Some families have told me that their children sat in chairs for six hours a day the whole year until every book was finished; some have told me that they never did any formal school. What did a typical school day look like that first year?

11. As a result of your experiences during year number one, what curriculum changes did you make the second year?

12. How was year number two different from year number one? What did a typical school day look like that year? Did your children spend more or less time with textbooks? Did you spend more or less time sitting with them every day?
13. Now I want to move into the present. This question is especially important. Suppose I was in your family room at the beginning of the day when the kids first came into the kitchen. What would I see happening as they came in? Take me there. Take me through your school day and let me see what happens, what you’d be doing, what they’d be doing, what that day looks like.

14. What advice would you give to moms who are presently contemplating home schooling their children? What would you tell them about choosing and using curriculum?

15. Do you have anything to add or to clarify before we stop talking today?
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
AND
FIGURES
Demographic Information for Participating Families

Name: __________________________ Number of years home schooling ______

1. Name/Age/Grade of children being home educated at home:
   M/F_____________________________ M/F _______________________
   M/F_____________________________ M/F _______________________

2. Did you remove your children from public or Christian education or start from K? (please be specific) ________________________________

3. Do you plan to home educate currently home educated children through 12th grade? Y/N Comment ________________________________

4. Is the father the main breadwinner? Y/N ______
   Occupation or Profession ________________________________
   Do you own your own business? ______

5. Is the mother a homemaker and home educator Y/N ______
   Mother work outside home? Y/N_____ If so, how many hours per week? _____

6. Highest Education of Parents: Father ___________ Mother ___________

7. Family income: Under $20,000 _______ $20,000 - $30,000_____
   $30,000 - $40,000____ $40,000 - $50,000 _____ $50,000 or over ______

8. Average amount spent per child per year on curriculum ____________

9. Religious affiliation ______ How often per week attend church? ______

10. Own Computer? Y/N ____ Use for educational purposes? Y/N_______

11. Average number of visits to library per month ________________

12. Formal instruction is taught primarily by: Mother? Father? Other?

13. Either parent have a teaching degree? ____ Who? _____________
   Degree/Major _______________________________________________________________________

14. Grandparents support home education? Y/N ____ Neutral____
   Opposed____
Some High School, Some College, Secondary Graduate, Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, Ph.D./J.D.

Figure 8.1: Father's Education Level
Figure B.2: Mother's Education Level
Figure B.3: Father's Occupation
Figure B.4: Mother's Occupation
Figure B.5: Family Income

- Under $20,000
- $20,000-$29,999
- $30,000-$39,999
- $40,000-$49,999
- Over $50,000

Number of Families:

- Under $20,000: 3
- $20,000-$29,999: 2
- $30,000-$39,999: 5
- $40,000-$49,999: 2
- Over $50,000: 7

Total Number of Families: 15
Figure B.6: Number of Children in Family

Number of Children

Number of Families

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Figure B.6: Number of Children in Family
Figure B.7: Grade Level of Students in Study
Figure B.8: Number of Years Families Have Home Schooled
Figure B.9: Visits to Public Library per Month
Figure B.10: Annual Amount Spent on Curriculum per Student

Dollars Spent per Student per Year

- Less than $200
- $200-$299
- $300-$399
- $400-$499
- $500-$749
- $750-$1,000
- Over $1,000

Number of Families

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Figure B.11: Religious Affiliation of Home School Families

Religious Affiliation

- Catholic
- Fundamental
- Independent
- Lutheran
- No Affiliation

Number of Families
APPENDIX C

CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Children's Interview Questions

1. How long have you been home schooling?
2. How old were you when you started? How old are you now?
3. Please describe a typical school day.
4. How is home schooling now different from last year? Did you have the same subjects? Did your mom teach you more?
5. Can you tell me, or remember, what home schooling was like your first year?
6. How many of your books do you get to choose?
7. What is your favorite subject? What do you like about it?
8. What is your hardest subject? How do you learn it?
9. Who checks your work? How often?
10. How do you learn best?
   a) When you read about something in a book?
   b) When someone explains something to you?
   c) When someone shows you how to do something and lets you help?
   d) When you watch them do something new?
11. How much teaching does your mom do?
12. How often do you watch TV? What do you watch?
13. Do you use the computer for school? What programs do you use?
14. How much reading do you do besides school reading?
What are you reading now?

15. How often do you go to the library?

16. Have you ever had instruction from anyone other than your parents?

17. Do you take any private lessons? What?

18. Do you play in any sports? What?

19. Does your dad teach you any subjects? If so, what?

20. Do you participate in any community activities (Scouts, etc.)? Tell me about them.

21. Do you think home schooling makes you different from kids that go to school? If so, in what way?


23. If you don't like one of the books or subjects you or your parents have selected, what do you do?

24. What motivates you to do your work?

25. What was the most fun project you ever did?

26. What is your favorite subject? What do you like about it?

27. Are you working on any special projects right now? If so, what?

28. Do you ever do projects with your brothers or sisters?

29. What do you like best about home schooling?

30. What do you want to do as a career?

31. Do you think you will home school your children? Why or why not?
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS FORM
Interview Analysis Form

1. MAIN THEMES, IMPRESSIONS, SUMMARY STATEMENTS about this family.
   Year One:

   Last Year:

   Current Year:

2. EXPLANATIONS, SPECULATIONS, HYPOTHESES

3. ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS, UNUSUAL PATTERNS

4. NEXT STEPS TO DATA COLLECTION: follow-up questions, specific actions, general directions field work should take.

5. Implications for REVISION, UPDATING OF CODING SCHEME

Adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994, p78
APPENDIX E

CODING CATEGORIES
CODING CATEGORIES

FAdj  Family Adjustments
CPr  Curriculum Problems
CCHG  Curriculum Changes
C/F/S  Curriculum Focused and Specific
FRel  Family Relationships
CChc  Curriculum Choices
P-F  Parents becoming Facilitators
ComV  Community Volunteer
Fut  Future Planning
ExtC  Extracurricular
Rd  Readers
Ind  Independent Learners
Wk  Working for $
ComL  Community of Learners
PL  Parents becoming Learners
Fre  Freedom
LfSt  School as a Life Style

Figure E.1: Early Coding

311
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<th>CODING CATEGORIES</th>
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<tr>
<td>BegH  Begin @ Home</td>
<td>PL   Parents as Learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO   Pull out</td>
<td>P-P  Parent as Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Att  Attitude</td>
<td>P-Te Parent as Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH   Character</td>
<td>P-Fa Parent as Facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAdj  Family Adjustments</td>
<td>P-Par Parent as Partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRel  Family Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTr  Family Trauma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPr  Curriculum Problems</td>
<td>ExtC Extracurricular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CChg Curriculum Changes</td>
<td>App Apprenticeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSp  Curriculum Specific</td>
<td>Fut Future Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CChc Curriculum Choices</td>
<td>Wk   Working for $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVar Curriculum Variation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS   Learning Style</td>
<td>Fre  Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSv  Learning Style - Visual</td>
<td>Ind Independent Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSk  Learning Style - Kinesthetic</td>
<td>Rd Readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSa  Learning Style - auditory</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>G    Goals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GCh  Goal Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ab   Abilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fx   Flexibility</td>
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<td>Ass  Assessment</td>
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**Figure E.2: Midstage Coding**

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<td>Educational TV/Video</td>
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<td>P-Te</td>
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<td>P-Fa</td>
<td>Parent as Facilitator</td>
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<td>P-L</td>
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Figure E.3: Final Coding
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