

Submission
No 38

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

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Select Committee on Home Schooling

Via website: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/homeschooling>

Dear Committee

I would like to contribute a submission to the upcoming Legislative Assembly Select Committee Inquiry into Home Schooling.

Before I continue I would like to explain that my journey into home schooling has been very closely linked to my sister's. Her name is _____ and she recently submitted her own submission. We have discussed her submission and in an effort not to repeat her I would like to state that I agree wholeheartedly with everything written in her submission and add weight to her points.

Although our families have very similar thinking in terms of schooling, we do, of course, have differing details. Consequently I will add my own personal information to my submission.

Background Information:

I have graduated with a B.Teaching and have worked in a variety of capacities in the school environment. I have especially enjoyed working as an aide and gaining further experience watching a variety of teachers and a range of students. My husband continues to work in both primary and high schools in the public and private sector in a welfare role. We continue to be passionate about education and enabling every student to reach their potential.

However, we decided to remove our children from school at the end of 2013 for all of the reasons listed in _____ submission, in addition to the specific needs of our two children, as outlined below.

Both our children received multiple awards for behaviour and academics. They know what they need to do to succeed in the system and do it very well. However neither have the ability to fail and struggle and persist at things they find hard.

Our Son, age 10.

Before Home Schooling:

Our son completed year 4 in 2013. He was one of the youngest in his year as well as one of the smallest. He has always been intensely shy, sensitive and cautious. Over the years I had brought up the idea of repeating him with the school, but was always told it would not be recommended given, his academic ability. Although we had a very close relationship with all his teachers, they have not seen in him what we see at home.

He displays behaviours that would place him on the autism spectrum, but we have chosen not to have him specifically diagnosed. Socially he has always made friends easily. However his closest friends know how to 'push his buttons', 'set him off' etc. He has a very high moral standard and sense of justice, and does not understand other students not telling the truth. He would get very upset when other boys would tell him he was 'out' when playing handball. Of course, they would continue to do that just to get a reaction out of him. Similarly when the bell went they would run away with his ball. Of course, we would tell him not to chase or to tell a teacher etc. But with his personality he could not hold back and had to chase. Another example was when his friends threw his lunch 'out of bounds' because they knew he wouldn't go and get it. It makes me sad to think that that was his understanding of friendship.

More recently the boys have been growing up physically and mentally and the gap between them has become more visible. We decided he would continue to go downhill if we didn't change something.

His black and white personality makes him very competitive. Of course this can work in his favour in the classroom and he achieves great results, especially in maths. While an onlooker would consider him a highly-motivated learner, he works for the result, rewards and accolades rather than the curiosity and love of learning. He also struggles greatly with comprehension and answering any indirect question.

Adding to our concerns, the school required that he would be working on a personal Ipad at school from 2014. His personality does not go well with extended use of technology and screen time. He

gets overstimulated, even more sensitive and angry. It would not be a good decision for us to allow this for him.

Since Home Schooling:

Since starting home schooling we have seen empathy in our son for the first time! He has actually started thinking about others around him and come out of the bubble he seemed to live in. He has made new friends very easily and we have continued his relationships with his old friends, in one-on-one settings. He is learning so much from spending time around people of different ages and in smaller groups, as well as having parents there to oversee social situations.

In terms of learning, we have been able to take him back a step in his language development in order to fill gaps that were missing. While he has continued to power ahead in maths, he has started to show real signs of enjoying learning in all areas, rather than only in areas he 'excels' in.

The biggest change that has impressed us is his overall sense of calm. He simply seems happier. He loves spending time with his sister and is gaining in confidence in himself (not simply bound in his academic ability).

Our Daughter, age 7

Before Home Schooling:

Our daughter (7) is much more carefree while also being highly academic. If it had been just her, perhaps we would not have considered home schooling. However, we have seen her similarly externally motivated and she was beginning to show signs of pride and an over-awareness of her 'place' in the classroom. We see our role as parents as much more than encouraging an academic child. It is much more important to us that she develop into a compassionate and hard-working member of society who knows who she is (beyond being 'smart') and knows what she is passionate about.

Since Home Schooling:

Since home schooling, she has shown similar developments as our son. She has made new friends and enjoys socialising with people of different ages, especially her brother. She is involved in a number of after-school activities and both children are developing such creativity and love for music.

Conclusion:

We understand that home schooling isn't for everyone, but truly believe it has been the best thing we could do for both of our children. We head into the future with our eyes wide open, learning more ourselves as educators and fully aware of the challenges and opportunities open to our children.

We are surrounded by supportive home schooling and non-home schooling families, as well as school staff. One of the underlying instigators in our decision to home school was our contact with young adults who had grown up being home schooled. They would seriously reassure anyone who was concerned about home schooling. They are some of the most loving, well-rounded, socially mature people I know who have gone on to pursue valuable careers and/or further tertiary study, and we would be blessed for our children to gain the outstanding qualities they display.

I thank you for taking the time to hear our story and hope it has aided your inquiry.

Sincerely,