

Submission
No 234

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 7/08/2014

Partially Confidential

Submission to Inquiry into Home Schooling

Financial Costs

Financial costs include resources such as stationery, printing, textbooks, workbooks, laptops, dvds, web based programs (such as Maths Online), educational curricula and materials (learning modules written by educational professionals), tuition (e.g., music and language), sporting activities and excursions. Home Schooling represents a saving to State and Federal governments, since the working parent pays taxes but the family does not receive any “funding that follows the child’s education”. Governments get a good deal, they audit the home schoolers to ensure they are performing but do not fund the home educational process.

Motivation of Parents

The initial motivation was due to our younger child (son) being officially diagnosed with Aspergers. We took the protective approach (due to our perception that schools are unable to stop bullying – perception based on observation and anecdotal evidence) and decided to home school. Our no. 1 child decided that she would also like to be home schooled. I (the father) was originally sceptical and agreed to trial it. After several months, I did a “180” on my sceptical view point when I saw the children learning in the home school environment (e.g., learning things about the natural world that I didn’t know) and the network of home school mums being 100% dedicated to their children’s development and organised in their role as home school facilitators (home school mums plan out the year).

A noteworthy anecdote is that we originally hid our home schooling from the neighbours until one of them, a working teacher, asked how the kids are going at school. After telling him, his response flawed us. He said he thought this was a good thing considering our son’s Aspergers, stating that he would get more educational attention in the home environment than he would at school.

Characteristics and Educational Needs of Home Schooled Children

I understand that there is a perception that home schooled kids are “nerdy” and “different”. This is a stereotype - they are normal children with similar needs as mainstream school children. Children are children; they have generic educational needs and specific educational needs. However, it would be interesting to see if the proportion of home school children with learning difficulties is greater than mainstream school children seeing learning difficulties could be a major reason parents decide to home school.

Other Comments

There are many pathways to the end result of acquiring new knowledge and skills; home schooling is one of them.

I believe that modern schooling practice is now based on the student-centric theory. Part of this theory is that the teacher is not the centre of the educational experience and is not the sole repository of knowledge. Home schooling is traditionally based on this and has used multiple resources to facilitate learning.

There is the old adage of “don’t change it if it isn’t broken”. Home schooling works – children achieve learning outcomes and have meaningful interactions within their home school communities and general communities. Home school children are good at socialising in a multi-age context (basically how society is structured).

One observation of home schooling is that “mastery” of curricula outcomes is important before the child is progressed to the next level. Without sounding critical, this is in contrast to mainstream schooling where students may not necessarily “master” the topic but are promoted to the next school year with new learning. I have seen much anecdotal evidence of children going into high school without knowing their times table.

Home schoolers utilise educational resources similar to distance education schooling. The modules have usually been designed by educational professionals and are written in a manner for the home school facilitator to implement. They are based on educational outcomes, content and skills presentation, student practice and assessment.

Educational resources with facilitation can achieve learning outcomes in the home school environment just as well as the mainstream school environment and the distance education environment.