



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

To Homeschool or Not to Homeschool: How Both Sides Got it Wrong,

Part II

by Scott McPherson

Writing the opposing view to the “pro” homeschooling position taken by *USA Today* in their September 3 “Today’s Debate,” Dennis L. Evans, director of doctoral programs in education leadership at the University of California, Irvine, came out swinging.

Writing under the heading “Home is no place for school,” Evans stated that “Home schooling is an extension of the misguided notion that ‘anyone can teach.’ That notion,” he summarily concludes, “is simply wrong.”

Evans’s conclusion is based on his observation that “some of our best and brightest college graduates, responding to the altruistic call to ‘Teach for America,’ failed as teachers because they lacked training.”

Shouldn’t this be an indictment of the “education” they received for sixteen years?

On the contrary: “Good teaching is a complex act,” Evans writes. Not even an “altruistic” educationist can resist the temptation to mystify his role.

Throwing a bone to homeschoolers, Evans says that “some parents may be competent to teach very young children.” Actually, the facts show that virtually every home schooling parent is more than “competent.”

But the words are hardly out when he offers the caveat that “competence will wane in more advanced grades as the content and complexity increases.” This statement is simply inexcusable. Any parent who is either homeschooling or planning to do so is quite aware of his own limitations, which is precisely why homeschooling networks provide information on tutorial services offered by fellow members. Those advertising to teach specific subject matter are usually homeschoolers themselves who have learned through personal experience that which Evans shrouds in mystery as the elusive “teacher competency.”

Tossing around university-level vernacular soon enough gives way, though, revealing Evans true gripe with homeschooling: “[S]chools serve important functions far beyond academic learning.”

Ahh. Now we’re getting to the crux of it.

“Attending school is an important element in the development of the ‘whole child,’” he says. “Schools, particularly public [sic] schools, are the one place where ‘all of the children of all of the people come together.’ Can there be anything more important to each child and thus to our democratic society than to develop virtues and values such as respect for others, the ability to communicate and collaborate and an openness to diversity and new ideas?”

Rarely will we have an opportunity to see so many misguided, inaccurate, and wholly offensive ideas communicated in one place.

Apparently, any good citizen would understand that teaching “respect for others” and “openness to diversity” is best left to a bunch of “overworked, underpaid” government employees armed with the latest fashions in child development – rather than to parents.

But trusting parents to do right by their children is the last thing Evans is prepared to consider. “The isolation implicit in home teaching is anathema to socialization and citizenship,” he says.

People who choose to homeschool have done so because they don’t think their child will get a proper education sitting for six or eight hours in a classroom. It is to combat the remoteness inherent in institutionalized schooling that they have taken their kids out of school – it is the classroom, not the living room, which sucks from children their passion for the outside world, with its plethora of cultures, races, religions, opinions, and peoples.

And what could make for a better citizen, than the child who learns from an early age how to learn and function in this real world, versus the stale, artificial, and contrived environment of a government school?

Still, it gets worse. “[Homeschooling] is a rejection of community and makes the home-schooler the captive of the orthodoxies of the parents.”

Translation: If children are taught at home, they stand a greater chance of learning about such heresies as limited, republican government, property rights, self-reliance and gun-ownership, religion (gasp!), the burden of taxation, and what it means to be the kind of citizen who takes responsibility for his own children – the kinds of ideas, values, and virtues rejected by the leftists dominating the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers.

It isn’t just the common man’s orthodoxy which can hold children “captive.”

A home schooled child is independent, free thinking, questioning, and hostile to artificial constraints – exactly the kind of person who might one day begin to question the need for what

education historian E.G. West called “a growing educationist bureaucracy and a protection-seeking teaching profession.”

But give the Devil his due: For focusing so hard on molding children like pieces of clay to represent the government’s definition of a “whole child,” advocates of government schooling have done a wonderful job of subjecting “all of the children of all of the people” to twelve years of stifling mediocrity, violence, drugs, class warfare, mindless ritual and militaristic routine, ringing bells, political correctness, sexual encouragement, dumbed-down curriculum, Ritalin, emasculation – and football as the height of cultural pursuit.

Contrary to the claims of Dennis Evans, the home is the perfect place for educating a child. The fact is, most parents want what’s best for their children, and no one knows better than they do what it will take to attain that. This isn’t to suggest that no one will fail, but it’s interesting to note that before the introduction of compulsory education laws in the United Kingdom, “there was a near-universal system of private fee-paying schools, and the majority of parents were using it (E.G. West).” Even arch-leftist Teddy Kennedy has admitted that literacy rates in Massachusetts were higher *before* the state started forcing parents to send their kids away to school. History testifies to the competence of individual parents in choosing what’s best for their kid’s education.

An education at home can be filled with fun and exciting experiments in learning, a chance to see the world through a grown-up’s eyes, with one-on-one attention and a vision of learning that encourages experimentation, boldness, and enthusiasm in the quest for knowledge – rather than the humdrum of rote memorization and a political agenda aimed at shaping the “whole child.”

The beauty of home schooling is that it gives the parent/teacher the opportunity to utilize the world as their classroom and, more important, to cater to their child’s individual needs and particular way of learning. “What is essential is to realize that children learn independently, not in bunches; that they learn out of interest and curiosity, not to please or appease the adults in power,” wrote John Holt, a radical proponent of educational reform in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. A home schooled child has the freedom to pursue his passions and interests, at his own pace and in his own time, without fear of punishment from teachers or peers, or the roadblock of standardized, one-size-fits-all curriculums.

By comparison, the government school setting provides only two options for growing minds: The cookie cutter, or failure.

Scott McPherson is a policy advisor at the Future of Freedom Foundation.

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