

# Another All Time High

By: Rep. Glenn Grothman

Every year the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction collects data on the total numbers of children educated in Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in this state. Once again last year, the number of children homeschooled in the state of Wisconsin reached an all time high. We are now at 21,100 students – about the size of the Racine or Green Bay school systems. This is more children than all of the Washington County school districts and has more than doubled in the last ten years. Estimates indicate that if anything, the national average is higher than that in Wisconsin. Homeschooling also received national attention when the top three winners of the National Spelling Bee and First and Second Place winners of the National Geography Bee were all homeschoolers.

This raises the question as to whether homeschooled children are being properly educated. Recent studies have come back overwhelmingly in the affirmative. University of Maryland Professor Lawrence Rudner, who began as an opponent of homeschooling, examined 20,000 children in fifty states and found that the average homeschooled 8<sup>th</sup> grader was four years ahead of his grade level. By grade twelve, the average student was in the 92<sup>nd</sup> percentile in reading. Homeschooling parents tend to be more educated than the population at large. However, other studies show significant benefits even after adjusting for education or income level.

This raises the question as to why homeschooled children do better. Individual attention is obviously a reason. Children can learn as quickly as possible without being slowed down while teachers help other children. Homeschoolers are much less likely to use ineffective modern education techniques such as whole language or new math. Virtually every parent is a highly motivated teacher.

However, an improvement in education performance is only one reason for homeschooling. Parents also cite the ability to choose their own curriculum. Current textbooks used both in public and private schools have a tendency to have a very liberal bias in history and the social sciences. The liberal social bias of our schools of education will inevitably seep into public school curriculum causing more and more Christian parents to question their public schools. This week's newspaper contains an article in which the New Berlin School District is doing more to educate students about homosexuality.

There was a time when there have may been some concern over social skills developed by homeschoolers. Studies now show that homeschoolers are more involved in extra curricular activities than public school children. Meanwhile, as the number of homeschooled children skyrocket, local homeschool groups spring up providing for group activities. As for children who would like to go to college, high-test scores are making it easy for these children to gain acceptance. Stanford University has accepted proportionally twice as many homeschool applicants as other applicants.

Most advocates of homeschooling expect the current trend to continue as local associations become stronger and the word regarding homeschooling continues to spread. The savings to the taxpayer is obviously huge. However, if these test scores are any indication to the boon to our society in general, as these children enter the workforce that benefit will be even greater.

Please let me know what you think on this issue.

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