

THE TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCE OF HOME-SCHOOLED STUDENTS  
ENTERING PUBLIC EDUCATION: HOW CAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS BETTER  
SERVE THE HOME-SCHOOLED STUDENT'S TRANSITION TO PUBLIC  
EDUCATION?

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A Dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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By  
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MAY 2007

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all whose assistance made this research project possible.

Foremost, I want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Jay Scribner. Dr. Scribner is an outstanding mentor and academic leader, and I was greatly encouraged by all of his insights and direction. I truly admire his professionalism and knowledge.

I am also grateful for my dissertation committee. In addition to Dr. Scribner, Dr. Brendan Maxcy, Dr. Peggy Placier, Dr. RuthAnn Roberts, and Dr. Jerry Waddle provided guidance and feedback into my dissertation topic and outline. I additionally want to thank Dr. Roberts and Dr. Waddle for their support during my work on my Educational Specialist degree through Southeast Missouri State University, and they both inspired me to pursue a doctorate degree.

I also want to thank Anne Calzone, a home school association leader in the Rolla, Missouri vicinity, and the Home School Legal Defense Association of Purcellville, Virginia, for all of the background information they provided on the home school movement. While Anne was extremely instrumental in connecting me with former home school families who made the transition to public school, I also want to acknowledge all of the home school association leaders who assisted me. Additionally, I am grateful for the families who were willing to participate in this research.

Finally, I would be remiss to not mention Dr. Dan Cockrell and our group of Cohort 4 doctoral students that met on Wednesday evenings at the University of Missouri-Rolla campus. Thanks to Dr. Cockrell and some of my buddies, Chris Neale, Mike Morriss, and Herman Blau, for planting and cultivating the seeds of this research.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study	
Significance of the Study	
Limitations	
Definition of Key Terms	
Summary	
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
History and Overview of Home Schooling	
Reasons for Home Schooling	
Foundation of Home Schooling: Parental Involvement	
Transitioning to Public Schools	
The Process of Transition	
Relationship of Public Schools and Home Schools	
Summary	
3. DESIGN AND METHODS.....	37
Research Problem	

Research Questions	
Population and Sample	
Data Collection	
Data Analysis	
Summary	
4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	52
Demographic Data	
Findings	
Motivations for Home Schooling: Pedagogues and Ideologues	
Motivations for the Transition to Public School	
Home School Motivations Influence the Transitional Experience	
Perceived Attitudes Toward Home-Schooled Students as Transitional Issue	
Home School Responsibility in Preparing for Transition	
Public School Transition Assistance	
Parental Desire to Stay Active in Child’s Education	
Summary	
5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	95
Conclusions	
Implications	
Parental Role in Preparing Students for Transition	
Public School Role in Preparing Students for Transition	
For Further Study	
Summary	

APPENDIX

1. PARENTAL AND STUDENT CONSENT FORMS.....	115
2. SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	118
3. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	122
VITA.....	132

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Characteristics of Families Participating in this Research.....	52
2. Reason for Home Schooling.....	55
3. Reasons Home School Children Transfer to Public School.....	63
4. Comparison of Home School Motivations, Public School Motivations, Academic Transition Experience, Home School Duration, and Parent Education Level.....	68
5. Initial Transition Experience to Public School.....	73
6. Comparison of Home School Motivations, Public School Reception, Socialization Problems, and Primary Transitional Difficulties.....	74
7. Responsibilities of Home School Families in Transition Preparation.....	99
8. Responsibilities of Public Schools in Transition Preparation.....	104



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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studied the transitional experience of home-schooled students in central/south central rural Missouri whose families decided to place them into the public school setting. Since the public school environment is markedly different from the home school setting, there was the assumption that home-schooled students would have transitional needs that could be addressed by the public school in order to help these students adapt better to their new educational setting. Families who had home schooled and then sent their children to public school were identified and interviewed. Pedagogical and ideological reasons for home schooling and then for sending students to public school were explored. Additional information provided feedback on the transitional experience and what parents and public schools could do to make the segue between home and public education smoother. Results indicated that the primary issue preventing home-schooled students from experiencing a smooth transition to public school was the negative perceptions by public school personnel. Participants acknowledged the need for both home school families and public school officials to be tolerant and understanding of each other. Participants presented several practical ideas that would benefit public school perception and reception of home-schooled students into public education.

Since this research focused on a convenience sample from rural south/central Missouri, these findings could be a springboard for transitional experiences of home-schooled students in suburban and urban areas. Other areas for further study include identifying which home school curriculums are most effective in producing academically sound students, what traits are common among effective home school families, and how public school officials actually perceive the home-schooled students they receive.



The Transitional Experience of Home-Schooled Students Entering Public Education:  
How Can Public Schools Better Serve the Home-Schooled Student's Transition to Public  
Education?

*Josh grew nervous as August 15 drew near. It was the opening day of school, and that Thursday would be the first time that Josh would attend a public school. Since he was four years old, the 14-year-old freshmen had been home-schooled. His mother and father had been his teachers, his younger siblings had been his classmates, and the internet and videotapes had been his resources. Sure, he knew a few of the public school students from the summer baseball league and his church youth group, but he was anxious about all the new students he would be meeting for the first time. He also wondered if his new teachers would be as patient as his mother, and he knew the public school culture would certainly be different from what he was used to belonging.*

Josh is not alone. Each year there are numerous home-schooled students who transfer into the public or private school system. This transfer can be extremely stressful as the very culture, lifestyle, and world of home-schooled students are changed during the move from one schooling option to another.

Any type of transition can bring anxiety as the old gives way to the new, the familiar is displaced by the unfamiliar. In fact, Levinson (1977) defines transition as that “in-between” time that segues the old era that is approaching its end into the new era that is just beginning. Herr and Cramer (1988) add that transitions are periods that link two eras, communities, or cultures and provide some continuity between them. Bruffee (1999)

describes transition as the change that involves reacculturation and learning where the boundaries of two different communities meet.

Unless there are preparations made to assist with the change, this segue can be accompanied by anxiety. The transition from a home school environment to a public or private school setting is no different. Students in transition need to be prepared for the changes in educational programs. This dissertation will study what motivates home schoolers to make the transition to public school which could help public educators understand the needs of home-schooled students transferring into public schools.

### *Purpose of the Study*

Public schools are in the practice of developing transitional programs for their students. Students with special needs require transitional services. Students moving from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school have transitional needs. Students graduating from high school and moving on to college or the workforce have transitional needs. Therefore, just as public schools prepare transfer or new students for change within its educational jurisdiction, so home-schooled students who either re-enter public education or enter public education for the first time have transitional needs that need to be addressed. Public schools who receive home-schooled students are generally receiving students who have had considerable parental support and encouragement. These students may also be highly motivated for academic success and have strong expectations of their learning experiences. Public schools need to know how to understand and assist these students. Additionally, parents of home-schooled students are generally highly involved and visible in their child's education. Parents of home-educated students are probably more engaged in the education of their child than are most

public school parents. Public schools also need to be aware of how to deal with parents who have been highly active in their child's education and have strong expectations.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the phenomenon of transition, discover why home schoolers make the transition back into public schools, and understand how public schools can help home-schooled students make this transition successfully. This study will address ways that public education leaders can reduce the fears, concerns, and reluctance that home-schooled children and their parents may have about moving from the unique home schooled setting to the "larger" world of public education. Transitional needs will be viewed from the perspective of the home-schooled family since they are the ones moving from a small, familiar world into the larger unknown.

This research study presents findings based upon data collected from interviews and surveys of parents who home school children who have allowed their child to enter a public school after being home schooled for a substantial period of time. Additionally, students who have been home schooled will be interviewed about their concerns and transitional needs.

The research questions are divided into five parts:

1. Why are home school families motivated to transfer their children into public schools after being home schooled? What factors contribute to this transition?
2. What factors influenced the quality of the transition experience from home school to public school? What made the transition experience positive and/or negative?
3. How can home school families better prepare themselves for the transition to

public schools?

4. What can public schools do to improve the transitional process from home school to public school?

5. How is the role of parental involvement affected by the transition from home school to public school?

### *Significance of the Study*

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in educational leadership by providing more information about home schooling, identifying the transitional needs of home-schooled students that move into public schools, and understanding the implications these needs have for administrators and teachers of home-schooled students. Furthermore, a greater awareness of home schooling and the implications of transition should assist public school administrators in developing policies and practices to enhance transitional programs at their schools.

Home schooling is an educational endeavor that has existed in our nation since its inception. With the advent of parochial schools, privately funded schools, and government-funded public education, home schooling was considered a bit of an anomaly. However, in the last several decades, there has been a resurgence of home schooling efforts. In 1960, there were an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 home-schooled children in the U.S., and by 1999 there were about 958,000 home-schooled students, which were about 2 percent of the school-age population (Hadderman, 2002). Nearly 2.2 percent of students in rurally populated areas are home schooled (Jaycox, 2001). State home school populations are doubling every three years (Pearson, 2002). An estimated three million students are projected to be home schooled by 2010 (Jones & Gloekner,

2004). Home schooling is essentially an educational and social movement which has made the transition from a fringe activity to a popular, mainstream alternative to the traditional, institutionalized school setting (Fowler, 2000).

However, home schooling is not without its critics and naysayers. Public schools seem to take the greatest offense of the home schooling movement, citing concerns about curriculum and the lack of socialization. However, research on home schooling appears to affirm the adequacy of learning and socialization within the general home school environment. Even later in life, adults who had been home schooled appeared to lead normal social lives and had no problems making friends out of school or college (Webb, 1999). Little evidence suggests home schooling is socially or academically harmful to students (Luebke, 1999).

Research also points out the success of home schooling efforts (Wood, 2003; Duffey, 1998). On national tests, home-schooled students generally perform better than public school students, typically in the 62<sup>nd</sup> to 91<sup>st</sup> percentile (Rudner, 1999; Lines, 2001), and by eighth grade, home-schooled students generally perform four grade levels above the national average (Rudner, 1999). Home-schooled students scored significantly higher in science achievement than public or private school students (Molsbee, 1996), and in Texas, home-schooled students performed better on state achievement tests (Jenkins, 1998). About 50 percent of home-schooled children go on to college or post secondary education and perform as well or better than traditionally schooled children (Gray, 1998; Wood, 2003; Jones & Gloekner, 2004).

While home education is a growing phenomenon in the U.S. and has documented successes, there are still home-schooled students who transfer into public schools. Some



students initially are educated in public schools, are home schooled for a season, and then re-enter public education. Other students are home schooled most of their lives and then for various reasons decide to enter public schools.

Home schooling is a unique form of education: there is a great deal of individualized instruction, there is a great amount of parent engagement in the child's education, there is an overarching motivation for student academic success, and there is also substantial insulation from the "ills of society" to which many public school children are exposed. Thus, for children who transfer from the unique home school setting to the mass education setting of public schools, there are adjustments and concerns that need to be addressed. Not only are home-schooled students in transition, but the parents of home-schooled students, who are highly engaged in their child's educational experience, also have transitional needs. In this research, the transitional needs of home-schooled students moving into public education will be explored. The issue of how public school leaders can help parents of home-educated students make the adjustment will also be addressed.

#### *Limitations*

Because of the exploratory and qualitative nature of this study, results cannot be generalized to the entire home school population in the United States. However, the findings from this study will provide important insights into the phenomenon of home-schooled student transition to public schools that will better inform and sensitize school professionals to the needs of this unique student population. Furthermore, this study focuses on rural students in Missouri. It is possible that home-schooled students from urban and suburban areas may provide different data.

Additionally, the pool of respondents will be selected from home school parents

identified for the researcher from state home school associations. Again, the respondents chosen may not be representative of the whole home-schooled population who do not belong to the state home school associations. For example, through my personal experience as a guidance counselor and administrator in enrolling home-schooled children into the public school, I have met a couple of families who home schooled because they were angry with their local school, primarily due to disagreement on disciplinary decisions. It is possible that families who home school out of anger may not join home school associations, as none of the research subjects that I contacted through home school associations had a “chip on their shoulder” toward public school. Therefore, families who home school due to anger towards their local school district were not represented in this study.

#### *Definition of Key Terms*

The operational definitions used in this study are defined as follows:

*Academic Achievement.* Determined by student’s scores as measured by standardized tests.

*American College Testing (ACT) Test.* Standardized test used by many public and private colleges for entrance into their respective schools.

*Home School.* The system of educational learning where the student is taught in a home environment rather than a public or private school. The parent or guardian of the child is responsible for the teaching of the student or for securing instruction. For the purpose of this study, home schooling will be defined as the process of educating the children within the home and with parents as the sole instructors (Davis, 2000).

*Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA).* Founded in 1983, HSLDA is

a national organization that is considered the preeminent home school organization for legal advice and resources.

*Ideologue.* Term for parents of home-schooled students that choose home school based on a belief that public schools do not teach the values that are desirable or that public schools teach values that are undesirable. Ideologues are parents who home school because of strong ideological differences with the content taught in traditional educational systems (Romanowski, 2001).

*National Household Education Survey (NHES).* A study commissioned by the National Center for Educational Statistics that evaluated the educational beliefs and practices of Americans and provides extensive data for nationwide practices on home schooling (Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman, 2001).

*Pedagogue.* Term for parents that choose home schooling based upon a belief that public schools do not teach well regardless of content and values. Pedagogues are parents who home school because of their preferences for formal learning which is based upon the children's interests and development (Romanowski, 2001).

*Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).* Standardized test used by public and private colleges for entrance into their respective schools.

*Transition.* As used in this paper, the process of moving from a smaller, simpler, more insulated environment to a larger, more complex setting.

### *Summary*

Home schooling is a growing movement in the United States as parents take on the challenge of being the primary providers of their child's education. Home schooling can have a positive impact upon a child's academic achievement, and home-schooled

students have been shown to perform as well or better than their public school peers on nationally normed achievement tests and college entrance exams, such as the ACT or SAT. However, even with the successes of home schooling, there may be reasons that parents may wish to put their child into the public education arena. Given the highly individualized attention a student receives in the home school environment, and the high degree of parental engagement in home education, transferring into a public school will present certain transitional dilemmas. An objective of this research is to discover what transitional needs home-schooled students have as they transfer into public schools and also to determine the transitional adjustments that parents of home-schooled children will need to make. Then public schools will have information that will help them provide the transitional needs of home school families.

## Chapter 2--Literature Review

There is very limited research on the home schooling movement. I have found adequate research on the reasons why families chose to home school and also research that substantiates the proficiency of home school achievement. However, while there are plenty of opinion-based articles on the advantages and concerns of home schooling, there is little, if any, actual research that identifies the inadequacies of home schooling or supports the superiority of home schooling. Additionally, Belfield (2002) points out that while research exists on the growth, legal, and civic aspects of home schooling, there is surprisingly little quantitative assessment or economic treatment of home schooling. Furthermore, I have seen minimal research on the transition of home-schooled students into public education, which makes this research all the more novel.

While this research project attempts to provide insight into why home schoolers transfer into the public school and seeks greater awareness of the transition process, conceptually this study will review why people home school, explore why they decide to leave home schooling, and then analyze the transitional experience of moving from home school to the public school. Just as important as why people home school is why they then choose to discontinue home schooling, setting up the phenomenon of transition. A review of the literature provides depth to an understanding of why home schooling is an attractive alternative to public education, and the literature also provides an understanding of transitional aspects. This research hopes to add to the body of knowledge on why people chose to transition out of home schooling into public education and what transitional needs home schoolers have.

In this chapter, an overview and brief history of home schooling will first be examined. Then the factors leading to parental engagement with the home school movement will be examined, followed by a literature review of the transition experience. Additionally, any literature exploring the reasons home schoolers transfer to public education will be highlighted. The relationship between home school and public schools will also be addressed as this relationship affects the success of transition.

### *A Brief History and Overview of Home Schooling*

The home school was the principal method in which early Americans educated their children, and this method was quite effective in producing literacy among the masses (Dailey, 1999; Wichers, 2001). During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, parents and others were acting as tutors and educators for children in their homes, and home education was practiced in many homes (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004). Some notable home schoolers include William Penn, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Agatha Christie, Pearl Buck (Moore & Moore, 1982), General Douglas MacArthur, Andrew Carnegie, and Mark Twain (Gorder, 1987).

While education was centered in the home during colonial days and early grammar schools were seen as an extension of the home (Klicka, 1994), it was also during colonial days that common schools slowly began to replace the home (Carper, 2000). Common schools were partly designed to “Americanize” immigrants and prevent excessive individualism from threatening the nation (Farenga, 1998). During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, after concerns that all children would be ensured of receiving basic skills necessary to lead a productive life by having state schools with a standardized curricula, states begin to implement and enforce compulsory school attendance laws, and parents

abdicated their responsibility to educate their children to the professional teachers of the state (Dailey, 1999). By 1918, all states had compulsory attendance laws, and public schools were firmly entrenched on the American landscape (Dailey, 1999). By the mid-twentieth century, with the prevalence of public education, home schooling was limited to families living in remote areas of Alaska, a few religious groups (Amish, Mormons, and Seventh Day Adventists), and itinerant families, such as military or missionary families, in which mothers taught children while fathers moved from place to place (Lines, 1991). The Calvert School of Baltimore, Maryland, for example, was established in 1906 to provide home-based education, but it was primarily designed for children kept home during epidemics and children of missionaries (Dowling, 2001). Public schooling in the United States was so monolithic by the mid-twentieth century that any other type of school choice was considered “taking children out of” the school system (Ray, 2000).

However, some American families still believed in the parental responsibility to educate their children at home. Even with public education available, some parents chose to home school their children because they felt it was the responsibility of the parents to provide a child’s education and to control the moral environment of their child (England, 1998). There were ideological and pedagogical reactions to public education. The ideologues believed that public schools were ineffective in providing the moral and religious teachings that young students needed, and the pedagogues believed that the teaching methodologies and strategies employed by public schools were not effective for their own children. Home school proponents spent decades working through the courts and through state legislatures to obtain approval for home school programs. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, liberal progressives, led by John Holt, who was a major critic of public

education, sought “unschooling” from what was perceived to be a “too conservative” public educational establishment (Stevens, 2001; Lines, 1999). Home schools in the 1960’s and 1970’s reflected a liberal, humanistic, pedagogical orientation (Reich, 2002). However, by the 1980’s, after a series of Supreme Court decisions had systematically eliminated Bible reading, prayer, and the teaching of creation science in public schools (Carper, 2000), home schools became the grounds for ideological, conservative, religious expressions (Reich, 2002). At that time, the conservative Christian population laid hold of the home school movement as an alternative to the “liberal” educational monolith (Stevens, 2001). R.J. Rushdoony and his book, *The Messianic Character of Education*, are credited with being an inspiration to the conservative home school movement as he was a strong advocate of religious education who decried the liberalism of American public schools during the 1960’s (Edgar, 2001). School board associations and professional teacher groups debunked home schools as an ineffective means of educating children, but research and the development of home schooling curriculums and programs showed that home schooling could be a viable alternative. By 1986, all states had enacted some provisions for home schooling as an alternative to public and private schools (Lines, 1998).

Because most states do not keep records of home schooling, a precise estimate of the number of home school children is difficult to determine. The lack of precision and accountability in identifying home school families does make research on home schooling a bit difficult to generalize: most home school families in some of the research I read would have been identified through affiliation with state or national home school associations and would not necessarily be indicative of the unknown or unaccounted



home school families, the “lone rangers” of home schooling, so to speak. However, in a statistically valid research effort, a 1999 National Household Education Survey (NHES) indicates that 1.7 percent of America’s school aged children are home schooled (Bieleck, Chandler, & Brougham, 2001; Belfield, 2002).

The 1999 NHES study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education painted a picture of the home schooling landscape in the United States (Newcomb, 2001). Out of 17,640 family respondents in the NHES survey, nearly 300 stated they home schooled their children (Belfield, 2002). A high percentage of home school families are white, most are two-parent families with a larger number of children in the home (Bauman, 2002). Home schooling parents are better educated: 47 percent of home schooling parents have bachelors or master’s degrees compared to 33 percent of non-home schoolers. Home school families also operate on one income: 52 percent of home school families have only one income compared to 19 percent of non-home schooled families. The department study also indicated that nearly 50 percent of the home schooling families were motivated to do so because parents felt they could offer a better education at home, while 38 percent of families were primarily motivated for religious reasons, and 25 percent of the parents mentioned a poor environment at school (Newcomb, 2001). Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman (2001) state that while early motivations for home schooling children were for moral or religious reasons, currently the primary reason parents home school their children is to give their children a better education than they can receive in public schools.

Additional demographic information indicates that the typical home schooling family is white, middle-income, and religiously conservative; in addition, one-half of all

home school mothers have college degrees, and the mother does the majority of the teaching (Lines, 1991; Luebke, 1999). Religious conservatives are attracted to home schooling because they perceive public schools as hostile to moral and spiritual values. This conservative group tends to be associated with larger rural families with strong religious values and lower or middle incomes (Sikkink, 1999). Of course, not all home schoolers are rural, conservative, religious whites—there are also liberals, African Americans, urbanites, libertarians, Muslims, Jews, and atheists who home school (Greene & Greene, 2003; Stevens, 2001; Lines, 1991). Ray (2002) discovered that a variety of people are involved in home schooling: high and low income families, parents with doctorates and parents with GED's, two-parent and single-parent families, and people from different ethnic groups and various religious and secular persuasions. In fact, research indicates that no significant differences in demographic, religious, socio-economic, and family structure can be detected in which parents are more likely to home school their children (Yang & Kayaardi, 2004).

Isenberg (2003) discovered that the more educated the mother is, the more likely that she will home educate her younger children. However, there is no relationship between a mother's education level and the education of older (secondary school) children. It appears that mothers of older children, even if highly educated, have greater difficulty substituting for the specialized teaching available at the higher grades in public and private schools (Isenberg, 2003).

While home schooling parents are generally better educated than parents of public schooled children, they are less concerned with their own academic qualifications. Held (2000) found that the well-educated home school parents were more concerned about

being educators that were informed, dedicated, motivated, and having the ability to show love and discipline to their child than possessing high academic credentials.

Also, 74 percent of adults, ages 18-24, which were home schooled take college level courses as compared to 46 percent of the general U.S. population (Ray, 2003). This is not surprising as parents of home-schooled students are typically better educated, and there is a relationship between parental educational attainment and the level of parental expectations of their own children (Kaplan, Lui, & Kaplan, 2001). Research has shown that the higher the education level of parents, the higher the college enrollment rate of their children (Clark, Shreve, & Stone, 2004). The education level of home schooling parents has been linked to the effectiveness of home schooling (Boulter, 1999).

Also, students who have been home schooled have been found to value education for themselves and their children, and they were heavily involved in more community service than non-home school individuals. Seventy one percent of home-schooled individuals became involved in community service as adults, compared to the average of 37 percent of U.S. adults (Ray, 2003).

While all of this demographic information paints a positive, healthy perspective of home schooling, I believe it can only be generalized to those home schooling families that “show up on the radar screen” and have been accounted for by home school associations and researchers. Not all home school families could fall into such a “rosy” categorization.

While the home schooling movement has research to support its growth—home-schooled students typically have more parental involvement, they experience academic success, and they are motivated to higher education—the home school movement also

has its detractors. Isenberg (2003) points out the deficiency of the availability of upper level coursework or instruction for home schooled high schoolers. There are big questions about the lack of socialization for home-schooled students, and Reich (2002) decries home schooling's inability to promote the democratization of society, and instead producing social withdrawal and isolation. So for all of its positive demographic information, home schooling also produces concerns. These concerns may lend themselves to some families' lack of persistence in home schooling.

*Reasons for Home Schooling: Pedagogues and Ideologues*

Lange and Lui (1999) categorize five major motivations for parent attempts to home school: educational philosophy, special needs of the child, school climate, family lifestyle and parenting philosophy, and religious/ethical concerns. Kozlowski (1999) found that protecting children from negative social influences and the explicit teaching of morals and values were two common motivations for parents to home school children. McLeod and Osterman (2003) discovered that student grouping practices and negative peer relationships were reasons for some parents to home school their children. Tragic, violent events such as the Columbine shootings and poor academic performance push others into home schooling (McDowell, 2000).

Van Galen (1991), Romanowski (2001), and Nemer (2002) simply categorize the motivation for home schooling into two different camps: *ideologues* and *pedagogues*. The ideologues home school because of ideological differences with public schools (i.e. lack of religious expression or the desire to teach family values) and the pedagogues home school because of dissatisfaction with teaching methods or the learning environment in the public schools (Nemer, 2002; Romanowski, 2001). Bauman (2001)

found that 33 percent of home schoolers are motivated by religious reasons and 33 percent of home schoolers are motivated to learn at home due to the poor learning conditions in public schools.

The use of the terms *ideologue* and *pedagogue* is probably the most succinct and simplistic way to explain the reasons for home schooling. Although scholars may have identified various detailed reasons that parents choose to home school their children, essentially all home schooling is done for *ideological* purposes and/or *pedagogical* purposes. In both cases, parents have decided to become heavily involved in facilitating their child's education. Parents who home school believe that they can do a better job of teaching family values and religious behaviors and/or provide a more effective, safer learning environment than can public schools. This parental involvement in providing better teaching experiences and pass on family philosophy is the great attraction of home schooling.

Ideologues use home schooling primarily as an exercise of religious faith (Van Galen, 2001) and to teach their children positive moral and social values. When parents home educate their children to inculcate family values, religious mores, and life lessons to their children and additionally protect them from the negative socialization of public schools (*ideological purposes*), home schooling can be quite effective. In terms of personal moral choices, there is a statistical difference between home-schooled and conventionally schooled children. McEntyre (2003) discovered that home-schooled children were less likely to watch MTV or X-rated movies, lie to an adult, gamble, get drunk, use drugs, or attempt suicide. They were also less likely to describe themselves as stressed out, angry with life, or confused. Ray (2003) found home-schooled students to be

happier with life, happier with their jobs and more satisfied with their financial situations.

Home schoolers are just as socially “well-adjusted” as non-home schoolers and exhibit fewer social problems like shoplifting and sexual promiscuity (Lines, 1991).

Romanowski (2001) found that home schoolers were the beneficiaries of positive socialization rather than the negative socialization that some students fall into at public schools.

Interestingly, the positive values and attitudes learned in a home schooling environment (independent study skills, appreciation for education, and perseverance in goals) contribute to making a smooth transition to the social and academic systems of college life, and it is suggested that home schooling is a viable option for preparing students with the skills and attitudes they need to succeed in college (Lattibeaudiere, 2000). Additionally, home schoolers learn to engage socially in multi-age situations beyond the classroom walls. Whereas public school students often limit their social interaction to individuals their own age, home-schooled students have greater opportunities to interact with people of all ages (Cohen, 2000; Romanowski, 2001). Thus, all of these social and moral benefits associated with home schooling are important to ideologues.

On the other hand, pedagogues want to have direct and total responsibility for their children’s educational progress and will avail themselves of resources, support, guidance, and extra curricular activities from many public sources (Vaughn, 2003). From a pedagogical perspective, parents believe they can offer a better curriculum, better learning opportunities, or better instruction than can be delivered at a public institution. Again, this pedagogical effectiveness of home schooling is documented.

Mason (2004) found that home schoolers tend to be highly motivated, self-directed learners, and pedagogues attribute this to an interesting, stimulating, and thorough curriculum. There have been a number of studies written on the effectiveness of home schooling in preparing students academically for postsecondary education, and analysis of academic achievement has favorably compared home-schooled students with their public and private school peers. Galloway (1995) discovered that home-schooled students did as well or better on grade-level academic achievement tests and of the 59 percent of home schooling families in New Jersey who assess their children annually on nationally-normed tests, 100 percent of the children scored in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile or above in reading and mathematics (Denoia, 2001).

Rudner (1999) found that home-schooled students performed well on American College Testing (ACT) tests. Universities are discovering that home-schooled students have above average ACT scores and are better prepared academically (Mason, 2004). In 2000, home schoolers seeking college admission scored an average of 1,100 on the SAT—a full 81 points above the national average—and an average of 22.8 on the ACT—when the national average was 21 (Winters, 2000). The qualitative research of Wichers (2001) showed that home-schooled children could be just as ready for postsecondary education as their public and private school counterparts. It appears from the literature, that if done properly, home schooling could be pedagogically effective.

#### *The Foundation of Home Schooling: Parental Involvement*

Home schooling is essentially the result of parents assuming responsibility for their children's education. Parental involvement and influence is the foundation of home schooling. In fact, parental presence and involvement is practically necessary for home

schooling to exist. Belfield (2002) points out that when the mother works outside the home, families are disposed away from home schooling and toward public schooling.

One of the great qualities of home schooling is the individualized instruction a student receives from parents. Of course, this parental involvement is a double edged sword: parents who are committed to home schooling have a great opportunity to create a solid learning experience for their child, but parents who through negligence or ignorance fail to capture this learning opportunity can possibly hurt their child academically and socially.

For all students to achieve an active, meaningful academic experience, they must each receive an education that has been uniquely tailored or personalized to their abilities and interests (Douglas, 2004). Even with Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) and 504 Plans available at public schools, this individualized attention and planning has no greater potential than in the home school environment. Gifted students and special needs students alike have benefited from the individualized educational attention. This individualized attention is due to the highly participative relationship between the parent-teacher and their children.

Ray (2002) found that the customization or differentiated instruction is one pedagogical reason parents want to home school. They are able to individualize the educational setting to meet their child's special needs or talents. Learning disabled and gifted children can do well in home schooling's customized environment (Ray, 2002). Home schooling for gifted students can be creative, progressive, and self-directed (Rivero, 2002).

Whether children are home schooled for pedagogical or ideological reasons (or a



combination of both), the greatest component of home education is the level of parental engagement and direction provided in the student's academic and personal growth (SRI, 2003). The most important factor in a student's academic success is a caring adult (Clark, Shreve, & Stone 2004), and this level of involvement and interaction that home schooling provides cannot be duplicated by any other educational setting. High levels of supportive parental involvement with students lead to higher achievement (Zellman & Waterman, 1998).

Sadly, parental involvement in education has fluctuated over the past two centuries. When parents relinquished responsibility for their children's education to professional teachers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, parental involvement in their child's education was greatly diminished (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Even when parents were later encouraged to join parent-teacher associations (PTA or PTO) or become room mothers, such efforts to increase parent involvement in education were superficial (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). There are renewed calls for parental and community involvement in the classroom, and so schools are learning the importance of parental input into the child's education.

Interestingly, studies are showing that parental involvement by itself is not a strong determinant of student academic achievement. Parental enthusiasm and a positive parenting style are important (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Involvement is not enough if the parenting style is negative and discouraging. Zellman and Waterman (1998) actually found that when the parent-child interaction and involvement is limited and negative, with critical messages being sent from parent to child, the child is less likely to please the parent by doing well. Thus, focusing on improved parenting styles is more important than

just getting the parent involved. Academic achievement in adolescents is related to the quality of relationship with the parents and the level of positive parental involvement (Sanders, Field, & Diego, 2004).

The relationship between a student and parents is paramount to educational growth. Parental educational expectations are strong predictors of student achievement (Clark, Shreve, & Stone, 2004; Li, 2000) and parents who have a healthy self-concept can impact the academic expectations of their children (Kaplan, Lui, & Kaplan, 2001) since students imitate the behavior of others if that example is highly regarded. Parental expectations impact a child's ability to internalize control and have motivation for academic success (Howse, Lange, Farran, and Boyles, 2003). Conversely, parents whose children were at most risk for a deficient education were the least engaged in their child's education (SRI, 2003).

The home school setting is highly conducive to building strong parent-child ties with its frequent interaction. Parents willingly engage themselves in most aspects of a child's education by either teaching the curriculum or obtaining it initiate home schools. Yet it is the amount of time that a parent spends with a home-schooled student that is most beneficial. The individualized attention is of extreme importance. A study by Duvall, Ward, Delaquadri, and Greenwood (1997) found that parents who have no professional teaching experience actually provide a comparable or an even better educational experience for their special needs children than a professionally trained special services teacher. The home-schooled special needs children were academically engaged two and one-half times more often as public school children and made more progress in reading and written language and had equal gains in math as their public

school counterparts.

And why was that? Children in home schooled environments received more individualized instruction than public school students, parents academically engaged their children more often than special education teachers, and the low number of students allowed parents to teach more effectively despite a lack of specialized teacher training (Duvall, Ward, Delquarai & Greenwood, 1997). It was more academic engagement time that improved the academic performance of the special needs students, and it is hard to replicate the amount of individualized attention a home school can provide with highly engaged parents.

The amount of time a parent spends with a child can enhance academic expectations (Sanders, Field, & Diego, 2001) and achievement. Blok (2004) suggests that the quality of the learning environment, which includes the one-on-one parental tutoring, could be a contributing factor to the positive finding that home-schooled children perform better than average academically. In fact, the lack of individualized attention, especially for special needs children, in public schools and the ability to provided one-on-one attention is a major draw of home schooling (Lange & Lui, 1999; Cramer, 2000).

The level of parental expectations and motivation is clearly evident in the home school environment. Cai, Reeve, and Robinson (2002) point out that parental motivation can have a positive impact upon student achievement and that even religious convictions may come into play into parental expectations on student performance. Rudner (1999) has identified that many home school parents have higher levels of education, higher income levels, and are married couples—all of these factors contribute to stronger expectations of their children. A surprising number of home school parents also have

been formally trained as teachers (Rudner, 1999), which again points to the higher level of expectations that a parent will have of their home-schooled student.

### *Transitioning to Public Schools*

Despite the academic and moral socialization successes of home school programs and the high level of parental engagement in their child's education, there are occasions that home-schooled children would transfer to a public school setting, typically during the junior high or high school years. Many home schooling experiences are short lived (Isenberg, 2003), and a large number of home schoolers return to public schooling at some point (Byfield, 2001). In fact, there is a large quit rate in home schooling after the first year. Isenberg's (2003) research found that only 63 percent of home-schooled students continued into the second year. However, after the second year, annual survival rates were much higher with retention rates from 73 to 94 percent for years two through six (Isenberg, 2003). Religious home schoolers (those who home school with religious convictions in mind) quit at lower rates than secular home schoolers (those who home school without any religious motivations). By the end of six years, only 15 percent of secular home schoolers were still involved; however, even among religious home schoolers, attrition decreases their numbers so that only 48 percent are still home schooling after six years (Isenberg, 2003).

So why the change? Sometimes students transfer to public schools to learn in an area that is not in their parents' strength (Dowling, 2001; Isenberg, 2003). While home schooling parents are generally well educated, there are those who feel inadequate to teach upper level secondary courses. Most desired linkages with public schools are for specific courses such as lab sciences, higher level math, foreign language, driver's

education, fine arts, and extra curricular activities (Chopp, 2001).

Another key factor in the home schooling family's decision to enroll their children in public education was to establish positive social interaction with peers and teachers (Krout, 2001). Just as there are public school personnel who question the lack of socialization or the limited socialization a home school child may receive, there are home school parents who see the need for a diversified socialization and send their children into conventional school settings for this reason. Dailey (1999) and Romanowski (2001) found that two common reasons for this transfer to public education are for student involvement in extra-curricular activities and for learning opportunities in higher-level classes that the home school setting cannot provide. Home schools cannot replicate the sophisticated labs or libraries found in public schools, and students are also limited in their opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities like band, choir, and sports. Thus, even some pedagogues and ideologues who are motivated by a desire to give their child the best educational experience look to public schools to assist in learning (Dailey, 1999). One options for these parents, according to Dailey, is to seek part-time access to public schools so that their students may participate in extra-curricular activities or gain access to school facilities. This option has met with limited success in a few states, so there are parents who have no good choice but to enroll their students full-time into public schools. Only a small percentage of parents state their local school districts offered their home-schooled students an opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities, receive curriculum support, or the chance to attend classes (Gewertz, 2001).

Interestingly, then, it appears that the two main reasons (ideology and pedagogy) that parents choose to home school their children become the two main reasons that

parents chose to send their children back to public school. Just as parents have ideological reasons to home school (such as to protect from negative socialization or to instill religious, moral values) so also do parents have ideological reasons to send their children back to a public school (to learn to socialize with different students or learn to participate in competitive sports). It should be noted, however, that the ideological focus shifts from a religious-moral-social philosophy to home school to a social-cultural ideology to transfer to public school. Additionally, just as parents home school for pedagogical reasons (more individualized attention, a better curriculum, or personalized teaching methods), so also do parents send their children back to public schools for pedagogical reasons (to become skilled in advanced subjects in which parents lack knowledge).

#### *The Process of Transition*

With this transfer of students from home schools into public education, there are adjustments that both students and parents must make. Change always involves transitional needs. This change will involve social and psychological adjustments (Lanaan, 1996) as home-schooled students leave the small confines of home with its high individualized structure to the more complex settings of public schools which cannot provide the same kind of adult engagement and encouragement. Studies of students leaving junior colleges for four-year colleges show similar transitional concerns: students leave the smaller college with its focus on student-centered learning and a more personal environment for the huge world of the university (Lanaan, 1996; Britt & Hurt, 1999; Eggleston & Lanaan, 2001). This transition brings with it a “transfer shock” of entering a more complex world (Eggleston & Lanaan, 2001; Berger & Malaney, 2003) where size,

location, and competition among students is different from junior colleges.

Transition theories find a basis in the work of Levinson (1977) who defined this concept that each new era begins as an old era is approaching its end. The time lapse between the old and new is what Levinson called transition. Gage and Berliner (1988) simply define transition as one phase or part of life has ended and another is beginning. Stress and anxiety in transition occur because of the change that is happening and also because of the rate at which it is happening. Dacey and Travers (1991) use Levinson's term, *structure-changing*, to describe the process of an individual reappraising his existing life's structure and then exploring the possibilities for a new structure. The change from an old way of living with its patterns and boundaries to a new way of living can be a major adjustment with the stress it can bring.

Additionally, Toffler (1984) found that the stress encountered in transitions is due to the incredible rate of change in one's life. The rate of change is rapidly increasing in human lives and so is the stress. Toffler (1984) identified three areas affected by change which produce stress: first, the concept of *transience*---there is a lack of permanence in one's life due to the rate of change, and this transience is stressful; secondly, the concept of *novelty*---some changes are more novel than others, and the more new situations one encounters in life that are dissimilar from old situations, the more stress there is; and thirdly, the concept of *diversity*---it matters what percentage of our life is in change. People used to maintain stability in most of their lives, allowing only a few aspects to change at any particular point. In contemporary society, there seem to be many aspects of a human's life that are in change---career moves, relationship shifts, educational attainments---and all of these diverse changes create emotional, social, and psychological

stress as well. All of these changes can create a “culture shock” or transfer shock that can cause humans to become disoriented and anxious about change (Dacey & Travers, 1991). These changes make the transition from one structure to a new structure uncomfortable.

For students, any time there is a transfer from one location to another, there are social concerns that arise---making new friends, identifying opportunities for extra-curricular involvement, and adjusting to the social climate (Britt & Hurt, 1999; Eggleston & Lanaan, 2001) as well as academic concerns (will the work be harder?) and personal adjustments (How do I find my way around? Or where is everything located?)

According to some school administrators, home schoolers who go to public school are often awkward socially and need time to adjust to the social context (Garland, 2001). Some school administrators feel that the lack of socialization a home-schooled student may receive is a concern as often home schooled children socialize with children with the same value system but are not used to being with people of a different belief system, which some administrators feel is important to a democracy (Dowling, 2001). This socialization-induced “transfer shock” can indeed cause discomfort for the new student.

The importance of having a transition plan becomes all the more relevant considering the possibility of transfer anxiety or “shock”. There is less disruption and anxiety in life when there are structured transitions (Gage & Berliner, 1988). If there is an organized process or a roadmap to make the move from one phase to the next, transition can be less stressful.

Understanding the transition process can assist educators in creating programs to help those in transition to public school. Transition can be seen as developmental, and not



just haphazard, as an individual is guided from one phase of stability to another phase of stability (Levinson, 1977). If transitions are simply seen as the periods that link two eras, communities, or cultures, then educators can work to provide continuity between these two areas (Herr & Cramer, 1988). Levinson (1977) claims that individuals operate out of a *life structure*, which refers to the patterning of one's life at a given time. Life structure evolves through alternating stable periods and transitional periods (Levinson, 1977). During transition, man reappraises his existing life structure, explores possibilities for change in the world and self, and moves toward the crucial choices that will form the basis for a new life structure in a next stable period (Herr & Cramer, 1988). The developmental task for educators during the transitional period is to terminate the existing life structure and work toward the new life structure (Levinson, 1977) as smoothly as possible. The more preparation and understanding of the transition that educators can provide, the easier an individual can transit from one stable life structure to another. Pre-transition experiences and preparation can help with a change in one's life structure (Berger & Malaney, 1988). However, there is a transition shock that can occur if individuals are not adequately prepared (Berger & Malaney, 1988) and people need to be prepared for changes because they lack the background for the new life structure that awaits (Goldschmidt, Notzold, & Miller, 1998). That is why understanding transition and the needs change creates for those in flux is important.

Educators can assist in the transitions that a student makes to a new life structure by understanding a student's old life structure. In order to help students with transition, educators must realize that transfer students have needs (Eggleston & Lanaan, 2001) and in order to help students with transition, educators must understand the student's

background and concerns (Berger & Malaney, 2001). By understanding a home-schooled student's culture and background, public educators can help those students make the transition to public school.

Public schools should take an active role in the transition of returning or newly enrolled home-schooled students (Krout, 2001). Schools may want to provide individualized programs as needed for home-schooled students and challenge the high-achieving home schooler (Davis, 2000). Students have high intensity concerns about transition as they approach transition with both excitement and anxiety (Akos & Galassi,, 2004). Helping students satisfy their needs and deal with the change is part of the transition process (Berger & Malaney, 2001).

A key ingredient in handling transition is preparing students for transition. Students need preparation because they lack background (Goldschmidt, Notzold, and Millan, 2003). There are academic, social, and procedural components to transition (Akos & Galassi, 2004) and students should be prepared for adjustments to these areas.

In devising a preparation program, schools should survey transferring students. All too often, transition programs are developed with little or no input from the students affected (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001), and in transition research, the voices of those most directly affected--students and parents--are frequently left out in transition programming (Akos & Galass, 2004). Too often, organizations base their transition programs on what is important to their own needs rather than focus on the needs of those impacted by the transition. It is important that parents should also be involved in the transition process (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001), as parental involvement in the transition process contributes to student achievement (Akos & Galsassi, 2004). Transition programs should also include

opportunities to meet with other students in similar backgrounds to discuss issues, concerns, and ideas in a structured and supportive environment (Mitchell, 2001).

This research focused on what transferring students and their parents need in order to make transition from the simpler home school environment to the more complex world of mass education (be it private or public schooling). If preparation for transition is important, then the transitional needs of home-schooled students and their parents need to be explored.

Successful transition can be measured by academic achievement and satisfaction with the school experience (Berger & Malaney, 2001). By identifying the needs and concerns of home-schooled students and their parents, the transition to public educational institutions can be positively impacted.

#### *Relationship of Public Schools and Home schools*

In order for public schools to be successful in providing transitional preparation for home-schooled students to the public school setting, the relationship between public schools and home schools should be considered. A comfortable relationship between two entities can enhance the ability to provide smoother transition from one life structure to another.

Current research has not explored in-depth relationships between the public schools and the home school environment; however, the relationship between public school staff and home schooling parents seems to be strained as both parties may have misinformation, suspicion, and a distrust of each other. There can be an understandable defensiveness that exists among the two polarities.

Since a lack of confidence and dissatisfaction with public schools can lead some

parents to remove their children from public schools and select alternative schooling (McLeod, 2002), public school staff can easily be alarmed and become guarded in the relationship with their “competition”. Public schools may feel a “slap in the face” that parents may question the effectiveness of public schools and consider parent educators over certified teachers. Some in public education are concerned with the lack of socialization home-schooled students receive and believe that this lack of socialization hurts the American democracy (Reich, 2002) by teaching individualism rather than integration. And of course, there is the loss of state revenue that comes from fewer students enrolled in public schools. Superintendents have reported that their districts were significantly affected by the loss of per pupil revenue associated with the loss of children from the public schools into the home school setting (Fairchild, 2002).

While public perception of home schools has improved significantly since 1990, school superintendents’ perceptions of home schools have changed little (Riegle, 1998). There is a tendency for public school administrators to question the validity and authenticity of home schooling. School superintendents generally have a low perception of home schooling and usually provide very limited support to home schools (Peavie, 1999). In one study, over 75 percent of school superintendents reported they were not at all confident in the soundness of the education children were receiving at home and these same superintendents showed strong support for revising state statutes governing home schools to ensure that home-schooled students receive an education equivalent to a high school education (Hendrix, 2003). In another study of Kansas public schools, only 3.7 percent of school districts had formal policies related to home schooling and nearly 75 percent of the school superintendents did not feel a responsibility to home-schooled

students with very few of the schools having any official communication with home schoolers (Lee-Bishop, 2002). A study of New Jersey public school administrators revealed that 46 percent of superintendents saw no benefit to home schooling and 67 percent believed the greatest detriment to home schooling was the lack of socialization (Denoia, 2001).

Surprisingly, with such a poor view of home schooling, school superintendents do not perceive the degree of negativity in their relationships with home school families. They probably have a weaker relationship with home school parents in their school districts than they believe. In one study of Indiana school superintendents, nearly 65 percent of administrators believed they had at least a fair relationship with home schoolers in their district, but only 35.5 percent of home school parents believed their relationship with the superintendent was at least fair (Reigle, 1998). Additionally, superintendents are not knowledgeable about the reasons for home schooling. Eighty six percent of superintendents believed that religion was the reason for home schooling whereas only 55 percent of parents cited religion as a reason for home schooling (Reigle, 1998). Reigle (1998) found that superintendents did not recognize parental concerns such as safety issues, academics, and problems within the public school.

The misunderstanding and poor perception by public school staff of home schools frustrates the public school-home school relationship. A majority of home schooling parents demonstrated a lack of relational trust in the public schools (McLeod, 2002) as they felt misunderstood by public school officials. Home schoolers desire improved relations and more interaction with public schools than they are receiving (Reigle, 1998; Peavie, 1999), and would like greater access to public school services.

Some superintendents are expressing openness to cooperation with home educators (Peavie, 1999) and improving relations with home schoolers. There are states and districts that are creating cooperative programs that allow home schoolers to receive public school services and the home-schooled students become part of the district's attendance count. Various mechanisms have allowed home schoolers to connect on a partial basis with the public school system (Reich, 2002). In Michigan, state guidelines permit home schooled children to participate in public school non-academic classes—such as art, music, and gym--and in extra curricular clubs and sports (Schermerhorn, 2001). Home-schooled students in one Arizona district spend one day a week in a public school setting (Eley, 2002), and in California, ten percent of charter schools serve students who are home schooled and other school districts set up virtual academies online to aid in the enrollment of home schoolers (Reich, 2002). Some schools allow students to attend certain classes and engage in extra-curricular activities while other school districts have set up home schooling resource centers, staffed by public school teachers and professional curriculum developers that home school parents can use at their convenience (Reich, 2002). In Iowa, there is a reimbursement policy for home school dual enrollment and home school assistance programs that actually cut per pupil revenue from a 2.7 percent budget loss to a 1.7 percent budget loss for Iowa schools (Fairchild, 2002); through this policy, 60 percent of home schoolers maintained a partnership with their district either through dual enrollment or home school assistance programs.

An improved relationship between public schools and home schools is essential to assisting home-schooled students in transitioning to public education. Home schooling families should lay aside any defensive attitudes and school districts should respect the

efforts of home schooling families as these students have positive test results and graduate successfully from their home school programs (Duffey, 1998). Partnerships should exist between public and home schools, and parents and public educators should see themselves as complementing one another (Romanowski, 2001). Attempts by public educators to reach out and include home schoolers have proven successful in enhancing collaboration between the public school and home school. Essentially, school administrators must revamp their way of thinking towards home schoolers if they are to be fair, understanding, and helpful in creating transitional or outreach programs for home schoolers.

#### *Summary*

Research has shown the growth, development, and academic success rates of home schooling. Home schooling has transformed from an obscure, idiosyncratic reaction to public education to a legitimate educational movement. Yet despite the successes of home school programs, there are still large numbers of home schoolers who transfer back into public or private education. Public schools must be prepared to help these students transfer to public education as home schoolers have transitional needs. Yet to be effective in providing transition programs for home schoolers, public schools need to drop negative feelings about home school programs and take a sincere interest in understanding the culture of home schooling and how to prepare home schoolers for the public education setting and structure.

## Chapter 3--Design and Methods

Having provided the background to my research, it is now necessary to explain how this study was conducted. Administrators and teachers can best serve transferring students by understanding why parents choose to home school and then later choose to have their children attend public school. An understanding of the home schooling background and life structure is important to bridging the gap to a new life structure in public education. I determined that interviewing home-schooled students and parents of those students is the best way to examine their perspectives on what transitional needs they have as they move from the home school environment to the public school environment.

Therefore, this research was based upon a qualitative design of gathering and analyzing data based upon surveys and personal interviews. Qualitative research is about other people studied in their own social setting and understood in terms of the meanings those people themselves bring to their situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), with an emphasis upon describing those meanings in that particular setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Qualitative research is more concerned about understanding a social phenomenon rather than predicting it, and hypotheses are often generated as a result of data analysis, rather than before the data is collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

I chose a qualitative study for the descriptive purpose of outlining the state of affairs (Frankel and Wallen, 2003) between home schooling and public schooling. A qualitative study provides a design for research that seeks to describe and understand a social phenomenon (in this case, the phenomenon of transition and the transitional needs



of home schoolers to public schools) and is context-specific (Wiersma, 1991). Within a qualitative research design, the researcher observes, investigates, and documents the environment in which the phenomenon occurs (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) in order to better understand the phenomenon.

Also, the qualitative design allows for a personable and humanistic means of gathering data within the researcher-subject relationship. Guba and Lincoln (1994) place a great value on the researcher-subject relationship. The researcher and the home school families are assumed to be interactively and interdependently linked so that the findings are said to be created as the research proceeds (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The systematic nature of this research process was guided by the following design: the problem or phenomenon was identified and relevant information was reviewed, data was collected, data was analyzed, and conclusions were drawn (Wiersma, 1991). From the written and oral data collected, common themes were identified that addressed the concerns and questions of transferring students and their parents. Possible means of satisfying these concerns and questions were also uncovered. The information presented will hopefully provide useful, practical information for public or private schools in developing programs to meet the transitional needs of home-schooled students.

#### *Research Problem and Purpose*

While home schooling can be a successful educational alternative, it also has its deficiencies, and there are many home schoolers who go back into public education. The purpose of this research study was to determine why parents send their children to public school after being home schooled and then to use this information to help public schools develop transition programs to make positive transfer from one life structure to another.

As public school leaders understand the concerns and questions that home schooled children may have as they move to the public school setting, these officials can better serve these students and assist them into moving into the learning community of the public school setting. Feedback provided by parents and students who have moved into public schools can be extremely instrumental in developing successful transition programs.

### *Research Questions*

While there was demographical data collected, the essential questions that identified the needs and possible means of meeting those needs were posited in the following five research questions:

1. Why are home school families motivated to transfer their children into the public school setting after being home schooled? What factors contribute to this transition?
2. What factors influenced the quality of the transition experience from home school to public school? What made the transition experience positive and/or negative?
3. How can home school families better prepare themselves for the transition to public schools?
4. What can public schools do to improve the transitional process from home school to public school?
5. How is the role of parental involvement affected by the transition from home school to public school?

Findings to these questions will be addressed in Chapter 4 with an emphasis

on the transition experience, and practical implications to what home school families and public schools can do to ease the transition process will be further reviewed in Chapter 5.

### *Population and Sample*

Population refers to the group with certain specified characteristics which the researcher would like the results of the study to be generalized (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). For the purpose of this study, home schooling families from the central and south central area of Missouri were the primary population from which a sample was selected to gather data.

### *Population Characteristics*

Since I had limited contact and experience with the home school movement, I contacted several area home school leaders within the central and south central rural Missouri regions to ask their assistance in providing information about home schooling and in locating home school families who had made the move to public school. Home school leaders were primarily identified by information provided in the *FHE Bulletin*, a publication of the Families for Home Education (FHE), which is a major home school association in the state of Missouri. I also received assistance through the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). In all, I contacted five leaders within the central/south central Missouri region.

According to information gathered from a leader in a home school association in south central Missouri, assumptions about the demographic picture of home schoolers in that region were drawn. According to home school association observations, home schoolers in central/south central Missouri are typically white, with incomes in the low-middle class to middle class range. They are one-income families with the majority of

mothers staying at home (however, some mothers do work part-time). For reasons stated above, mothers are primarily responsible for overseeing the home school program. These families generally have chosen to home school for religious reasons and dissatisfaction with the public school system. The home school families in this area are typically families with younger children and most of the home school families begin home schooling before their children are in high school. The home schoolers are primarily Protestant, which is typical of the general population in the area, and most home schooling parents have at least two years of post-secondary education, with some of home school parents actually possessing a Missouri state teaching certificate and having public school teaching experience.

While the demographics of the home school population were provided by a home school association leader who identified these characteristics of families presently home schooling, it was assumed that these similar demographics could be carried over to that subgroup which had home schooled and then made a move into public education. The sample of subjects for my research represented a rural, lower middle-income, Caucasian region of the state.

#### *Identification of Subjects*

I relied upon the home school association leaders to assist me in identifying subjects for this research. While all home school leaders contacted were helpful (albeit a couple were a bit skeptical at first until reassurances were made that this research was not a statement assessing the validity of home schooling, but rather an attempt to better understand home schooling), only three leaders were able to identify and then provide me with a list of contacts who were willing to help with the research on understanding the

transition from home school to public school (the home school leaders called these families to see if they would be willing to help with the research). All of the home school leaders acknowledged that few families within their associations had transferred into the public schools; most of their families had continued to home school or put their children into private schools.

On a side note, I found this information regarding home school preference for private schools interesting. While the research of Byfield (2001) and Isenberg (2003) pointed out the high rate of home school families who stopped home schooling after the first couple of years, it appears in the central/south central region of Missouri that home school families who decided to terminate home schooling chose to send their children to private schools rather than public schools. This can probably be attributed to Isenberg's (2003) findings that nearly half of all religious-based home school families will persevere in their home school efforts. Since the families I interviewed in this research and the home schooling leaders I encountered to assist with this research all had religious backgrounds, it would make sense that the home schooling families in this area of Missouri would continue to home school or find suitable religious private schools for their children.

Meanwhile, home school association leaders were able to locate some families who decided to go the way of home school to public school. Initially, I arranged for a purposive sample of subjects, subjects who met my purpose of having experienced home schooling and then transferring to public school. From this purposive sample, a convenience sample of subjects was drawn from willing volunteers of former home school families. A convenience sample is any group of individuals that is conveniently

available to be studied (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). A drawback of convenience sampling is that the data and conclusions described by this research can only be generalized to the home school population involved in this research and not the whole population of home schooling families who move their children into public school (Wiersma, 1991; Thomas & Brubaker, 2000). However, a convenience sample was necessary since no lists of home schooling families were available from the state causing me to rely heavily upon home school associations to provide research subjects. From that non-random sample, subjects (both parents and students) were chosen on their willingness to participate in the study. This sample of subjects, including parents and students, was selected because of their special qualifications to the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003), primarily that they would provide robust information to studying the phenomenon of transitioning from home to public schools.

In all, these home school leaders provided a list of twenty families who might be willing to participate in the home school/public school transition research. I then called each of the families to explain the project, to verify their willingness to participate in the research and to ask permission to send them consent forms. Of the twenty families I initially contacted, I identified seventeen families that intimated a strong ability to communicate and showed a genuine interest in my project. Of this sampling of seventeen families, only thirteen actually participated. Four of the seventeen families eventually declined participation as they said their busy schedules did not permit time to be interviewed.

#### *The Researcher as Participant*

As the researcher-observer of the data collection, I also played a role as a

participant in this study. Qualitative methodology utilizes the researcher as an instrument. Guba and Lincoln (1994) point out that the worldview or the basic belief system of the investigator has greater significance within the research than the actual methods of the research. In fact, from the perspective of Guba and Lincoln (1989), the researcher takes on a highly personal role with the research itself: the researcher becomes more of a collaborator than a controller, the researcher assumes the role of learner rather than just an investigator, and the researcher shapes the reality of the findings rather than just discovering and reporting them.

I agree that my prior experience (or lack thereof) with home schooling did impact my research. I brought to the research project my own biases. I had some prior understanding, although limited, of the home school movement due to some of my past experiences. Having spent 19 years in public education, primarily as a guidance counselor and school administrator, I have interacted with home-schooled students who transferred into the public schools. I have observed home-schooled students who were quite successful in public schools both academically and socially. Conversely, I have also noted home-schooled students who seemed ill-prepared and awkward with the move to public schools. All of these students had unique transitional experiences and I was intrigued by this phenomenon of transition: Why did home-schooled students come to public school? Why were some home-schooled students more suited for the transition than other? How could the public schools better meet the transitional needs of the home-schooled students? I was led to probe the issue of home school transition further due to this background experience. It is through the lens of transition that I became involved in this collection of data.

### *Data Collection*

The process of gathering data occurred during the summer and fall of 2006 after I contacted home school associations and families to identify those whom might cooperate with the research efforts. This research project implemented demographic surveys and individual interviews as the primary instruments of data collection. Survey methods involve gathering information and then reporting a summary of the findings (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000). My research utilized a direct-data survey in which I gathered information from individuals through means of questionnaires and interviews (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000). I believe this is an effective means of gathering data from a specific group of people (rural families who had formerly home schooled) in order to gather their perspectives about the phenomenon of the transition experience from home education in rural Missouri to the larger culture of public education in rural Missouri.

Once research subjects were confirmed, I secured consent forms from the participants, which documented permission to interview and submit to a written survey as well as assured participants of confidentiality and other participation rights. Once consent to participate was gained from the subjects (see Appendix 1 for consent forms), I began setting up a schedule in which to administer the survey (see Appendix 2) and the interview questions (see Appendix 3). While most participants agreed to personal sit-down interviews, a number of participants preferred to be interviewed over the phone due to scheduling conflicts. I had some difficulty in scheduling the interviews as I had to work around vacations, relocations, and other time-related constraints.

In all 11 students and 13 parents participated in the research. As a couple of families were a bit reluctant to have their children participate, the number of students



involved in this research was less than the number of parents. I also began to experience a saturation point (Seidman, 1998) among both students and parents in which the data I had collected was becoming redundant, and so while I had additional parents and students within some families whom I could have interviewed, I decided to keep my interviews at 11 students and 13 parents. In all, a total number of thirteen different families who had been involved in home schooling and then made the decision to transfer to public school participated in the research. These students had attended eleven different public school districts, primarily in rural Missouri, and had unique transitional experiences within these different districts. By having students from different school systems, I felt my research would have a diversity of experiences from which to draw.

#### *Questionnaire/Survey*

The questionnaire/survey was the initial data collection technique I used to gather demographic and other relevant data regarding purposes and beliefs regarding home schooling and transferring to public schools. Income level, race, age brackets, reasons for home schooling, reasons for going to public or private schools, and views of public and private schools were gathered, primarily for comparative information. The questionnaire also provided several subjective responses that were used as a springboard for questions posed in the interviews that followed. The questionnaire survey administered to the convenience sample involved in home schooling is shown in Appendix 2.

#### *Individual Interviews*

Once I collected data from the demographic surveys, I selected a purposive sampling of subjects to participate in individual interviews. Based upon the quality of answers I received on the questionnaire/survey, I identified individuals who were selected

for interviews as I observed that they could provide a rich, thick description of transitional needs of home school families. These subjects were chosen after reviewing the surveys because they seemed articulate and knowledgeable of home school issues. Also based upon the answers provided in the questionnaire/survey, I was able to include in my interviews individuals who were home schooled for ideological and/or pedagogical reasons, based upon the categorization of Van Galen (1991), Romanowski, (2001), and Nemer, (2002).

The personal interviews were used to identify transitional concerns, needs, and suggestions for public schools and home schoolers in preparing for transition. From these individual interviews, qualitative data was reviewed and analyzed.

The questions used in the personal interviews were derived from the emerging themes and ideas uncovered during the surveys. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998) point out, the researcher does not assume enough is known to know important concerns before undertaking the research, and so I discovered additional interview questions from the information provided by the participants' responses on the questionnaires. The focus of these questions in the interview were focused on the home schoolers' transition experience of going to public school and what public schools could do to make transition smoother for the home-schooled student and parent. A list of questions used in the personal interviews is found in Appendix 3.

Typically, parents were more expressive in the interview process than the students, and I received my richest data from parents, although several students provided thorough information as well. While all interviews were individualized, parents were permitted to sit in on student interviews if it would make students feel more comfortable

with the interview process. If both parents were present for interviews, they were interviewed as a team rather than interviewed individually. The individual interviews provided the most insight into answering the five research questions and in establishing the key findings of this dissertation.

Each interview lasted between thirty to forty-five minutes. Student interviews tended to be shorter with parent interviews lasting longer as parents were more thorough and detailed with their answers. These individual interviews were either tape recorded if I was able to sit down with the participant or they were done over the phone, in which I would take notes. The tape recordings were then transcribed so that I could read the information provided. I already had written notes and summations from the telephone interviews.

My intention in using questionnaire/surveys and individual interviews was to provide richer, thicker description of the transition phenomenon and a greater understanding of how public schools can meet the needs of transitioning home schoolers. I received my main quotations from the interviews, which was my main source of raw data. While I received insightful demographic data and general thoughts from the questionnaires, my greatest insights and deeper levels of discussion occurred during the individual interviews. It was from the interviews that I was able to discover the participants' level of emotion, understand how they organized their world, and find insight into their thoughts on their experiences and perceptions (Patton, 1990).

A limitation of using the direct data means of questionnaires and interviews is that the information provided could only provide conclusions for the families that I used in this convenience sample. Since I used a convenience sample and did not random sample

or have a complete list from which to sample, I know that the descriptive conclusions I find with my specific population cannot be generalized or be applied to other populations (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000).

### *Data Analysis*

By late fall of 2006 I was able to review and analyze the data I had collected. Research data was obtained directly by assessing the information provided by subjects in this study (Frankel & Wallen, 2003). Qualitative research focuses on collecting all possible information and then organizing that information into themes and patterns revealing meaning from the participant's perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). I analyzed and identified common themes about the research population from the data collected from demographic surveys and personal interviews. I was able to identify major themes of parental responsibility in preparing students for transfer to public school, public school responsibility in transition preparation, and purposes for transferring from home school to public school. These similar themes can be attributed to represent the interests of the sample's population. The information gathered provided the basis for my suggestions for public schools to consider while preparing transitional programs for home-schooled students and this information also provides insight into the minds of home-schooled students and their parents.

The two levels of data collection (questionnaire-survey and individual interview) provide the internal validity of this research. With similar ideas emerging in both the survey and interviews, I assume that my data can be accurately interpreted. Additionally, with the number of individuals involved in the study from the initial questionnaire to the individual interview, I also assumed there is the external validity of being able to

generalize the results of the sampling to the general home school population in central and south central Missouri since the sampling is representative of the home school demographics in that area. While I am not proposing a broad generalization of my results since I am doing a qualitative study (Wiersma, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), it is my hope that the results are generalizable and also have comparability and translatability so that other researchers can understand these results and use these results to extend knowledge about home school transition in urban and suburban areas.

In terms of reliability, it is my belief that there will be an internal validity of consistency in data collection and interpretation since I am the only researcher doing the work. Furthermore, the questionnaire and interviewing techniques employed in this study should enhance the external reliability of this study and allow other researchers to replicate this study elsewhere.

The limitations of my design are that interviews are self-reports and subject to individual biases and subjectivity. Additionally, the results apply to the specific group of participants in the study and may not be generalized to all home school families since the data is based upon personalized experiences.

### *Summary*

In developing a transitional program for home-schooled students who would transfer into a public or private school, school leaders need to first hear the voice of home-schooled students and their parents. To understand how to prepare home-schooled students for transition, school leaders must understand the concerns and suggestions of those affected by the transition. The qualitative design of this study can provide information into the needs to be addressed by such a transitional program. The use of

surveys and interviews to provide rich, descriptive information can be useful in providing insight into the life structure of home schooling and then address concerns of moving into the life structure of public education.

## Chapter 4--Presentation and Analyses of Data

Demographic data were collected via parent and student surveys of those who had home schooled in the past. The demographic data helped paint a picture of the race, income level, religious background, education level, and family structure of those participating in this research. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the research participants.

Table 1  
Characteristics of Families Participating in this Research Project

Family	Race	Education Level*	Two Parent Household	Income Level	Religion
1	White	Bachelor	Yes	\$30-60,000	Baptist
2	White	Bachelor	Yes	\$60-120,000	Mormon
3	White	Bachelor	Yes	\$60-120,000	Baptist
4	White	Bachelor	Yes	\$30-60,000	Pentecostal
5	White	Associate	Single	>\$30,000	NonDenom.
6	White	Associate	Yes	\$30-60,000	Pentecostal
7	White	Associate	Yes	\$30-60,000	Baptist
8	White	Associate	Yes	\$30-60,000	Baptist
9	White	Diploma	Yes	\$60-120,000	Baptist
10	White	Diploma	Yes	\$30-60,000	Catholic
11	White	Diploma	Yes	\$30-60,000	Baptist
12	White	Diploma	Yes	\$30-60,000	Baptist
13	White	Diploma	Yes	\$30-60,000	Pentecostal

\*Education notes the level of education for the parent or parents most responsible for home schooling. All participants had a bachelor's degree, associate's degree or a high school diploma.

Demographically, 100 percent of the families represented were white. Twelve of the thirteen families were two-parent households, with one family headed by a single mother. All of the families represented called themselves Christian. Of the 13 families

interviewed, seven were Baptist, three were Pentecostal (Assembly of God), one was nondenominational, one was Catholic, and one family was Mormon (Latter Day Saints). Almost all families involved in the research fell into either the \$30,000 to \$60,000 family income range or the \$60,000 to \$120,000 income range, with most in the lower middle class range of \$30,000 to \$60,000. Educationally, of the thirteen adults interviewed, five had high school diplomas, four had associate's degrees, and four had a bachelor's degree. None of the interviewees had a master's degree or higher although one was working on his master's degree and another parent had considerable graduate hours. Only one of the parents had a teaching degree. The occupations of the home schooling parents were varied, including a paramedic, several business owners, an electrician, two ministers, a district manager for an agricultural chemical company, and several stay-at-home moms. I noticed that the demographics of this particular group of subjects fit within the national demographics of home schooling families (two-parent, middle income, religious, Caucasians); however, this group did not have the advanced education levels (bachelor degree and above) that national research indicates (Lines, 1991; Luebke, 1999; Bauman, 2002). Perhaps, the lack of bachelor degrees and above may have been a contributing factor in some parents' decision to feel inadequate to continue home schooling.

Interestingly, from reviewing the surveys, I found that the perceptions of the students matched the parents as to the reason that the families home schooled. The top reasons parents gave for choosing to home school students were that children could receive a better education at home, the public school was not meeting the child's educational needs, and the public schools did not provide the religious or moral training that parents wanted for their children. Students were also able to identify the purpose for



home schooling as the home provided a safer, more beneficial learning environment and there were values that parents wanted to teach the children that could not be gained at a public school.

Also, of the thirteen families involved in the research, the average span for home schooling was approximately four years. Parents identified the close family relationships and the ability to tailor the curriculum to their child's individual needs as the greatest benefits of home schooling. Students also identified the close family bond as a great benefit of home schooling along with working at a pace that was challenging to them. The most common frustrations of home schooling were the inability to teach or offer upper level courses at the home school level and children not being disciplined to do their work.

### *Findings*

With data collected from the questionnaires and personal interviews, I was able to gather insights about home schooling and transition to public schools. Namely, I will address my findings in the following sections:

1. Motivations for home schooling: Pedagogues and Ideologues
2. Motivations for the transition to public school: Pedagogy and Ideology revisited
3. Home school motivations influence transitional experience
4. Perceived attitude toward home-schooled students as a transitional difficulty
5. Home school responsibility in preparing for transition
6. Public school transitional assistance

## 7. Parental desire to stay active in child’s education

In each section, I will present data and provide analysis of what I learned through my interaction with the research participants.

### *Motivations for Home Schooling: Pedagogues and Ideologues*

While understanding why parents chose to home school was not a major question posed by this research (there is adequate existing research which identifies reasons for home schooling), it is worthwhile to understand the purposes behind these specific, Missouri-based research subjects’ purposes for home schooling as it provides deeper insight into the public school transition.

Just as national research (Van Galen, 1991; Romanowski, 2001; and Nemer, 2002) points to a rather basic two-pronged reason for home schooling—ideology and pedagogy—I too was able to identify the same home schooling purposes in my study. Ideologically motivated families home school because they sense a moral, philosophical, or religious purpose to their endeavor. Pedagogically motivated families home school because they believe they have a better curriculum, teaching methodology, and academic setting in which to train their students. Table 2 shows the primary reasons for home schooling among participants in this study.

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Table 2  
Primary Reason Families Gave for Home Schooling

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<i>Pedagogical Reasons</i>	<i>Number of Families</i>
The public or private school was not meeting my child’s educational needs	5
My child can receive a better education	2

at home as I can provide more enrichment and life-long learning activities

*Ideological Reasons*

The schools did not teach my child the religious or moral values that I think are important in life	5
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I believe that God mandates that I teach my child in His ways	1
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<i>Total Families</i>	13
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As Table 2 indicates, the families interviewed were divided between pedagogical and ideological purposes as their main reasons for home schooling. A slight majority of the families interviewed placed their main emphasis on pedagogical reasons for home schooling, as the basis for seven of thirteen families' decisions to home school was clearly for purposes of providing their children a better learning opportunity (pedagogical) than what they thought public schools could provide.

The top pedagogical reasons to home school, as indicated by Table 2, was the belief that public schools were not educating the individual children the way parents wanted them educated and also the belief that parents felt they could educate their children more effectively. While both of these reasons sound similar, the first belief arose from dissatisfaction with the efforts of the public school, and the second belief was grounded in the initiative of the parent to school their own children. From the ideological perspective, parents believed that schools could not teach the values they wanted their children to have, and one parent even felt that God mandated that she teach her children at home.

*Pedagogical motivations to home school.* Pedagogically motivated families (or pedagogues) believe they can offer their children a better and more effective academic environment than public schools. While such families may have ideological reasons for home schooling as well, their primary purpose for home schooling is to give their children a unique and solid academic experience. In this study, many of the pedagogically motivated families cited concerns with public school curriculum, classroom management, and teaching methods as their main reason for home schooling. Two of the families cited confidence in their own teaching ability as a factor in home schooling. In fact, all of these families began home schooling their children as early as kindergarten or first grade once they realized their own ability to be effective teachers or experienced concern over how well their particular public school would teach their children. These concerns ranged from reading methodology to classroom management and instruction.

Four of the seven pedagogically motivated families home schooled because their local public school emphasized a sight-based reading program rather than a phonics-based reading program. For example, one family began to home school their son during his first grade year after identifying problems his reading skills. The father explained his concern with the teaching strategies of that public elementary school:

We chose to home school our son because of the reading curriculum he had in first grade---they [the school] had chosen a sight-based reading curriculum over a phonics-based teaching method. We began to see that our son was not learning to read—only memorize words by sight. We thought he was learning to read because he would read to us books he would bring home from school, but we noticed as we would take him shopping at Wal-Mart with us that he could not read what was on the signs. We asked the school what was going on and they informed us they were part of a new pilot reading program. I then asked the teacher to help us and she said that [the sight-based approach] was how she was supposed

to teach. There were no solid private schools within an hour's drive of us, so it was then we decided to home school in order to teach our son how to read properly.

Another mother began home schooling her oldest daughter in third grade over reading concerns and feeling like her daughter's first and second grade years were academically wasted. Her comments were, "I was disgusted with the school system. My daughter could not read and could not sound out her words. They didn't use phonics and only taught her to read by sight." This same mother began to home school her younger children from kindergarten on as she did not want them to get behind in their reading skills as her oldest daughter had.

Yet another family began home schooling their child in third grade after she was having reading problems at school. It was when this family learned that they could take academic matters into their own hands that home schooling became a viable option for them as the mother related:

My daughter was having trouble learning to read. We had tried summer school and after school tutoring, but she kept getting behind. One summer my husband worked with her, using Hooked on Phonics, and she did very well. So we decided to home school her as she was not getting what she needed at public school. Home schooling was very positive for my daughter and she was caught up to speed, becoming a very good reader and student.

However, frustration with the public school reading methodology was only one reason for home schooling. Three of the families in my research expressed concerns over classroom management and school structure as a major reason for home schooling. They wanted their children to have a positive learning environment, free from poor teacher attitudes and disruptive students. A former home-schooled student sized up her parents' decision to begin home schooling her in first grade by her mother's belief that she could

be more effective than some teachers:

My parents were ministers, and although I started off in public school, when they took over a church in the inner city...that's when we started to home school. My parents realized how unsafe and unstructured that city school system was and with the huge turnover rate of teachers, they did not believe I could get a good education at all in such a poor learning environment. They were concerned about if I would digress in my learning amidst the distractions and apathy. So my mom began to teach me, as she had been home schooled herself and knew what to do. It wasn't until we moved to a church in the country that they put me back in public school. Then they felt the schools were more safe and consistent, and they had greater faith in the teaching ability of the teachers.

Another home school family cited their disappointed with the structure of the public school system as their reason for pulling their young sons out of public school in their second and fourth grade years:

At our local school district, it was luck-of-the-draw on what teacher a student would get. For the first couple of years at public school, our son kept getting placed in the classrooms of teachers who had weak instruction. We knew there was better instruction to be had out there. Also, our youngest son was in a classroom where there was not good discipline and structure and we knew there was little learning going on—the classroom was just too disruptive. We had to do something to help out our children, so we pulled them out [of public school].

Then there was the mother, who had a teaching degree from the state of Missouri, who home schooled her four children, starting at their kindergarten year. She felt confident of her abilities to teach her own children after first hand experiences of several concerns with her local public school district:

I home schooled because I had my degree in elementary education and I knew I could do it. Besides, I was a substitute teacher and I saw some of the attitudes of the administrators and teachers in that particular school district. For them education was a business, it was their job...there was such a bureaucracy and an institution...the children were second...there was a lot of time wasted and I didn't feel such a rigid environment was flexible enough to meet the individual needs of my children. Teachers spent their time on several high-maintenance children and the good kids didn't get that much attention. It really disturbed me. I knew I could do a

better job with my children at home. I could not in good conscience put my children in that kind of system, as I knew my daughter needed more stimulation and attention than what she would get at public school.

In all cases for the seven families who home schooled for pedagogical reasons, they believed they could either provide or find a better means to academically prepare their children.

*Ideological motivations to home school.* In addition to pedagogical reasons to home school, families in this research also had ideological purposes for home schooling. Ideologically motivated families (ideologues) have a religious, moral, social or philosophical basis for home schooling—they want to teach their children particular beliefs, values, or lifestyles that they do not believe public schools can provide. In fact, most ideologues believe public schools reinforce values, beliefs, and lifestyles that are contrary to how these parents want to raise their children. Six families in this research had predominantly ideological motivations for home schooling their children. Their purpose was to both instill certain values and beliefs within their children while at the same time protecting their children from values perceived to dominate public schools. These ideological motivations ranged from concerns about liberal agendas that may have infiltrated the public schools to believing that God wanted parents to teach their own children to parents wanting to control what values their children learned during those formative years.

One family acknowledged a couple of major ideological reasons they decided to home school their children. They started home schooling their oldest daughter in eighth grade due to her personal behavioral and academic problems, and afterwards they decided to home school their younger elementary children to protect them from the

“societal ills” or negative socialization of public schools:

Our daughter was having some social problems in school and she wanted us to home school her and so we did... for her eighth and ninth grade years as she had been having a lot of problems in public school making good grades and with some of her behavior. So we started home schooling her and her behavior changed and she started making honor roll grades. Then we also started home schooling our younger children when they were in elementary school...it was mostly over concerns over a more liberal agenda that we heard that public schools might be teaching such as condoning homosexuality or having sex education materials that did not promote abstinence... or the promotion of abortion and the National Education Association [NEA] agenda.

Since this parent had no evidence of his local school district promoting a “liberal” or “NEA-influenced” agenda and practices, it would seem his ideological concerns may have been based upon rumor or misinformation. However, whether such reasons to home school seem legitimate to public school leaders, they were very real concerns for the subjects of the interview and the basis for their decision to home school.

Of course, not all ideologically motivated parents just wanted to protect or insulate their children from the “bad influence” of public schools. For most of the ideologically motivated families in this research, they wanted to instill and nurture particular values, social skills, and religious beliefs within their children. For instance, one mother decided to start home schooling her ninth grade daughter because she believed it was “God’s will for me to train up my child in the way she should go. God gave that responsibility to me, not to the public school.”

In another example, one family, of which the father was actually a member of the Board of Education at the public school when they decided to home school their elementary school-aged daughters, cited religion as their ideological basis for home schooling:



We realized that the school couldn't teach my kids that God was God...that God had everything to do with everything...math, science, the universe, history. God is the basis for everything...He created it all. And since the state, and also the public schools, had chosen to dishonor God or perhaps it would be better to say they could not honor God, I knew I needed to pull my kids out of such a system.

For some of the families, public schools were not in a position to teach the values and religious beliefs which were paramount to these families. Such ideological reasons were strong enough in these families' minds to justify home schooling, just as protecting their children from the "bad" influence of public school socialization was justification for other home school families.

In summary of this section, all the families in this research had ideological or pedagogical reasons for home schooling. These motivations were in line with previous existing research (Van Galen, 1991, Romanowski, 2001).

*Motivations for the Transition to Public School: Pedagogy and Ideology Revisited*

Just as it is important for public schools to understand why families choose to home school, public school leaders should also understand why home school families choose to send their children back to public schools. While research has shown that families essentially home school for pedagogical or ideological reasons (Van Galen, 1991; Romanowski, 2001; Nemer, 2002) and this particular research confirms similar reasons, I also found that parents in this study sent their children from home school to public school for ideological or pedagogical reasons as well. From the families interviewed in this research project, it was determined that the families who home schooled for pedagogical or ideological reasons also sent their children to public school for pedagogical reasons (i.e. to be challenged academically, have a structured learning

environment, or have access to learning resources) and ideological reasons (i.e. to learn to socialize with the diverse student population, to have extra-curricular opportunities, or to share their faith with other students). Table 3 presents an overview of parental reasons for sending their children to public school.

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Table 3  
Primary Reasons Home-schooled students Transfer to Public School

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<i>Pedagogical Reasons</i>	<i>Number of Families</i>
To take upper level high school courses that could not be offered at home	3
My child would not listen to me and cooperate with my home schooling efforts	1
 <i>Ideological Reasons</i>	
To participate in extra-curricular activities (band, sports, choir, drama, etc.)	5
To learn to socialize with other students who had different beliefs and values	1
<i>Other*</i>	3
<b>Total Families</b>	<b>13</b>

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\*Among answers for “Other” were the student wanted to go to public school to share his Christian faith, a student who wanted to have an official high school diploma, and a student who wanted to have a better chance at obtaining college scholarships.

In both the survey questions and in the interviews, parents and students were asked to identify the main reasons they decided to go to public school. All

respondents had answers that were either pedagogically or ideologically motivated. Even when respondents listed “Other” as their primary reason for going to public school, their answers had pedagogical or ideological leanings. The student who returned to public school to share his Christian faith had an ideological motivation and the students who wanted either a high school diploma or a better chance at receiving a scholarship both had pedagogical leanings—they wanted to improve their academics and their chances of getting into a good college.

While all families had pedagogical or ideological leanings to the decision to transfer to public school, I noticed an irony to these decisions. The irony is that families who were pedagogically motivated to home school tended to be ideologically motivated to send their students to public school, and the families who were ideologically motivated to home school tended to be pedagogically motivated to transition to public school. This discovery will be discussed further in the following finding.

*Ideological motivations for transferring to public school.* Interestingly, most parents chose ideological reasons for sending their students to public school with the major reasons being the opportunity for their children to participate in school activities and learning to socialize with students with different values and beliefs. Interestingly, the ideological motive for home schooling had more of an emphasis on religious, moral, or social training, whereas the ideological motive for sending students to public school had more of a social-cultural and emotional emphasis.

For five families in this study, the motivation to transfer to public schools was for students to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as sports or academic teams. Sometimes it was as simple a reason as one student subject who had been home schooled

during middle school, said, “I wanted to go back to public school because I missed my friends and wanted to be back in band.” Others who transferred to public school had multi-faceted ideological reasons as this one parent, who sent his two boys to public school once they reached high school age, explained:

For us, there was a threefold reason for sending our boys to public school. First we wanted to better prepare them for life. We felt that public schools would provide more opportunities to be prepared for the real-life world. Secondly, we wanted to broaden our boys’ social skills and allow them to be active in school sports and activities. Finally, we wanted to offer more advanced classes for our children—the online school we used for our curriculum had great course offerings, but we wanted our children to be challenged with more advanced coursework that was available at our local high school.

There were also two families who believed it was important that their children learn to socialize with others different from them. One family mentioned that their deciding factor for going to public school was to expose their children to different values and beliefs in order to better prepare them for the real world. Another parent shared how his son went to public school during his eighth grade year so that he would not only be exposed to different values, but to also influence other students with his own personal values:

One reason we put our child back in public school was that he was 6’4” and loved basketball. Basketball was huge to him. Although our home school association now has a basketball league, at the time my son wanted to play basketball, it was not set up. Also our son was incredibly gifted musically, and we thought the school might offer him more opportunities musically. But the clincher for us was when our son came to us and said he was ready to go to public school and see if he could live out the values we had taught him at home in an environment where students may not share the same values. He came to us and said he felt his faith was strong enough to be challenged by people who did not share his Christian beliefs. With that kind of inner conviction, he went back to public school in eighth grade.

Parents and students both had similar answers when it came to reasons for going to public school. The parents who cited involvement in school activities as a basis for going to public school also had students who cited school activities as their reason for going to public school. Students who mentioned going to school to learn to cope with diverse student populations also had parents who stated the need for their children to grow socially as a basis for transferring to public school.

Essentially, the families who sent their students into public school for ideological reasons believed that their children had a good academic background, but needed to be in an environment that would allow them to develop in extra-curricular and social pursuits. These parents and children believed the public school setting would provide such a social-emotional opportunity.

*Pedagogical motivations for transferring to public school.* While most of the families in this research had a mixture of ideological and pedagogical reasons for sending their children to public schools, there were six families that had predominantly pedagogical reasons for sending their students to public school. These reasons including lack of course offerings at home, lack of advanced coursework available through home schooling, lack of confidence in ability to teach certain subjects, inability to maintain a structured, managed learning environment, and lack of learning resources and facilities at home. As one parent stated, “I was worried about keeping up with their learning and if I knew enough about the different subjects to teach them as they got older...my daughter was having trouble with Algebra and I couldn’t help her much.”

The concern for their children’s educational future weighed heavily on the minds of several families who sent their children to public school as indicated by this one

parent's response:

We were getting tired [of home schooling]...and the math was getting harder and we felt like we could not longer help our child in that area. Another concern for us was that we were taking on some foster kids, and it is harder to home school four children versus one or two. I think it was also getting hard for our kids to see mom and dad as teachers but rather they saw us as their parents and didn't take the teaching role as seriously...but it was mostly that we did not feel equipped to prepare them for what they wanted to do in life. One of the kids wanted to be an Air Force pilot and another [wanted to be] an investigator, and the other a nurse. We started thinking about how we were going to prepare them for their future and we knew we didn't have the right math background and other skills to do it right and we didn't want our kids to miss something they needed.

This family, along with the five others, sent their children to public school so their children could learn in a structured, educationally challenging environment and to make up for the academic deficiencies of the home school setting.

So this research also showed that families not only home schooled for pedagogical and ideological reasons, they also sent their children to public school for pedagogical and ideological reasons as well.

#### *Home School Motivations Influence Transitional Experience*

The reasons that families home schooled influenced the reasons they decided to send their children to public school, and this reasoning also influenced the transitional experience. Interestingly, this research did uncover a bit of a phenomenon—families who primarily home schooled for *pedagogical* reasons (they believed they could provide a better learning environment at home) tended to send their students back to school for *ideological* reasons (they wanted to provide social-emotional growth opportunities for their students); and conversely, families who primarily home schooled for *ideological* reasons (they felt public schools did not provide the moral, spiritual, or belief systems

conducive for the students) tended to send their children to public school for *pedagogical* reasons (there were concerns about their child’s educational development).

Of the seven families who decided to home school for *pedagogical* reasons, six of those families sent their children to public school for *ideological* reasons, primarily to learn to work with diverse student populations and to participate in extra-curricular activities. Conversely, of the six families who decided to home school for primarily *ideological* reasons, five families sent their children to public school for *pedagogical* reasons, primarily to pick up the academic skills that were not obtained in the home school setting.

This pedagogical/ideological dichotomy did affect a student’s transition to public school. Students who were home schooled for primarily pedagogical reasons typically became honor roll students in public school and seemed to have a better social adjustment with peers and teachers, whereas students who were home schooled for primarily ideological reasons usually required some degree of remediation. Table 4 shows the difference in pedagogues and ideologues and how successful was their students’ academic transitions to public school.

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Table 4  
Comparison of Subjects’ Home School Motivations, Public School Motivations, Academic Transitional Experiences, Home School Duration, and Parent Education Level

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Family	Home School Motivation	Public School Motivation	Public School Academic Status	Home Schooling Duration (in Years)	Parent Education Level
1	Pedagogical	Ideological	Honor Student	6	Bachelor Degree
2	Pedagogical	Ideological	Honor Student	8	Bachelor Degree
3	Pedagogical	Ideological	Honor Student	6	Bachelor Degree
4	Pedagogical	Ideological	Honor Student	5	Bachelor Degree

5	Pedagogical	Ideological	Honor Student	10	Associate Degree
6	Pedagogical	Ideological	Honor Student	4	Associate Degree
7	Pedagogical	Pedagogical	Average	4	Associate Degree
8	Ideological	Pedagogical	Remediation	3	Diploma
9	Ideological	Pedagogical	Remediation	1	Diploma
10	Ideological	Pedagogical	Remediation	3	Associate Degree
11	Ideological	Pedagogical	Honor Student	4	Diploma
12	Ideological	Pedagogical	Remediation	3	Diploma
13	Ideological	Ideological	Honor Student	4	Diploma

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Table 4 shows that six of seven families who were pedagogically motivated to home school had children who became Honor Roll students in public school. Four of six families who were ideologically motivated to home school had children who needed some form of remediation in public school. It is interesting to note that the two ideologically motivated families who had honor roll students in public school both were involved in a unique home school program: both families home schooled their children for three days a week and then sent their children to a Christian school for two days a week for academic assistance. Both families admitted their ideological motivations were not enough to effectively home school their children and credited this academic assistance for their children's success.

*Transitional experiences of the pedagogically motivated.* Students who came from pedagogically motivated home school families showed strong academic ability upon their entrance to public schools. For example, one of the students whose family had a strong pedagogical purpose for home schooling returned to public school as a ninth grader and due to her strong academic exposure at home become a consistent honor roll student. Another home-schooled student not only became an honor roll student but was also put into the gifted program at the high school. Additionally, in another home school family, the two children both were high academic achievers with honor distinctions—in fact one



of these students went on to earn a high score on the ACT test and received a full-ride scholarship and research opportunity at a state university. In all these cases, these students credited the strong academic exposure and parental involvement they had while home schooled as a reason for their successful achievement while in a public high school. In all of these cases, the families had pedagogical motivations for home schooling their children (and ideological reasons for putting them into public schools).

*Transitional experiences of the ideologically motivated.* Meanwhile, those parents who were ideologically motivated to home school children appeared to have noble intentions of protecting their children from the “evils” of society, but did not usually have the strong academic support or background to help them sustain and develop a dependable home school program. While their hearts may have been in the right place, in reality it seemed that such families just did not have the strong educational background, management, and curriculum necessary to make home schooling effective. Consider the family who appeared to have “shot from the hip” in their home schooling efforts:

Well, we really didn't have a set curriculum...it was like “let's talk about this today” or we might see something on the news and talk about it. Then maybe our whole day would go around a topic we saw on the news...even our math lesson. We got our workbooks from Wal-Mart and K-Mart, and we got placemats that had the Presidents on them so that our children could learn the names of Presidents. We tried to think what would be good for our kids and what they would like to learn.

Such a haphazard approach to home schooling led to burn-out and frustration for this family as they eventually felt inadequate to properly teach their children. This family had the motive to protect their children's minds, but did not have the educational structure to teach them as they wanted, and their children needed remediation upon

entrance to public school. This was a common result for families with ideological motivations to home school--their good intentions could not make up for the lack of academic preparation, and the children did not learn as well as they could have, hence the pedagogical reason of sending their children to public school—so that they could be “properly” educated. The children transferred to a public school for pedagogical reasons usually required some academic remediation upon entrance to public school. One student, who entered public school in ninth grade, had to repeat a math course she had taken while home schooled due to the lack of math skills she had acquired while at home school. Another student who entered public school during the middle school years needed some help with improving reading skills. A couple of home-schooled students in this study who went to public school also had to be put into special reading classes for remediation.

*Different motivations, different transition experiences.* I observed that parents who home schooled for pedagogical reasons usually had the means to provide the child with a solid educational experience at home which helped them in their transition experience to public school. First of all, I discovered in my interviews with these pedagogically motivated parents and students that these families had access to effective curriculums or knew where to receive academic support and beneficial learning materials.

Secondly, these families also had a commitment to education and had a strong structure and organization to their home school setting. For example, as Table 4 indicates, those families with a pedagogical reason for home schooling home taught for four years or more, whereas the families with ideological purposes tended to home school for four years or less. One student, whose mother home schooled her because of the belief that it was the family’s responsibility to God to train their children, was only home schooled for

one year at which time the parent recognized her inability to do an effective job.

Thirdly, a final observation regarding the difference in ideologically and pedagogically motivated families was the level of education. As Table 4 shows, the pedagogically motivated home school families typically had a parent with an educational attainment of an associate's degree or higher, whereas ideologically motivated parents had an associate's degree or lower in educational attainment. This observation reinforces the idea that pedagogically motivated families had better education and felt more confident in their abilities to provide their children with a better academic environment. Ideologically motivated families appeared to lack the educational background and confidence that came through advanced learning, thereby impacting the quality of home education they could provide their children.

Although a pedagogical or ideological motivation to home school did have a major influence on the transitional experience of students to public school, namely in terms of academic preparation and success, this academic preparation, or lack thereof, was not the most difficult transitional difficulty experienced by home-schooled students. With the next finding, I discuss how home school family perception of public school reception was the most important factor in how home school parents and students judged their transitional experience.

#### *Perceived Attitude Toward Home-schooled Students as Transitional Issue*

While none of the students and families involved in this research had any regrets about transferring to public school, the transition from home school to public school typically involved some difficulty for most of the families interviewed in this research. Although some of the students had a positive transition experience to public schools, the

majority of students in this research had some transition difficulties. Table 5 gives an overview of the research participants' general experience with the transition to public school.

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Table 5  
Initial Transition Experience to Public Schools

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Of the 13 families represented by this research, this table indicates the number of responses to the initial transition experience

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<i>Initial Transitional Experience</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
The child had a positive transition experience due to the helpful and understanding climate of the public school system	4
The child had a negative transition experience due to lack of social skills and the inability to fit in with other students	1
The child had a negative transition experience due to public school's skeptical and negative treatment of my child	5
The child had a negative transition experience due to unfamiliarity of school procedures and practices	1
The child had a negative transition experience due to academic deficiencies and need for remediation	2
Total Families	13

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While four families cited no major transitional problems in going to public school, Table 5 indicates how the home school families perceived their initial treatment

by the public schools as their greatest transitional hurdle or their greatest assistance. While academic remediation, social adjustments, and unfamiliarity with school procedures also presented transition difficulties, no obstacle was so pronounced as the perceived suspicion and negativity home school families felt from school personnel or students.

Table 6 further breaks down the transitional experiences of each home school family participating in this research. Families noted whether they felt public school initially treated them with negativity, if they felt there were any major socialization adjustments, and they identified their primary transitional difficulty.

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Table 6  
Comparison of Subjects' Home School Motivations, Public School Reception, Socialization Problems, and Primary Transitional Difficulties

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Family Number	Public School Motivation	Public School Initial Reception	Socialization Problems?	Primary Transition Difficulty
1	Ideological	Negative	None	School Perception
2	Ideological	Negative	None	School Perception
3	Ideological	Negative	None	School Perception
4	Ideological	Negative	Yes	Social
5	Ideological	Positive	None	None
6	Ideological	Positive	None	None
7	Pedagogical	Positive	None	None
8	Pedagogical	Negative	None	Academic
9	Pedagogical	Positive	None	School Procedures
10	Pedagogical	Positive	None	Academic
11	Pedagogical	Positive	None	None
12	Pedagogical	Negative	None	School Perception
13	Ideological	Negative	None	School Perception

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Although Table 6 does not indicate any relationship between a family's pedagogical or ideological bent and initial reception by public schools, the table does show that perceived public school reception was a major determinant of whether the home-schooled students had a positive or negative initial transition to public schools. Of the six home school families who perceived a positive attitude towards them by the public schools, four said they had no major transitional difficulties and the other two mentioned either lack of familiarity with school procedures or academic deficiency as their main transitional difficulty. However, of the seven home school families who felt they were perceived negatively by the public schools, five families said the initial public school treatment was their main transitional difficulty. Each of the transitional difficulties will now be discussed in more detail.

*Public school reception.* The primary difficulty in the transition came from the school's treatment and reception of the home-schooled student. The hurdle that caused the greatest difficulty in the transition to public schools was the perceived attitude of the administrator or personnel in charge of enrolling the home-schooled student. According to several home school families, principals and counselors generally acted with skepticism and reluctance in enrolling home-schooled students and placing them in appropriate grade levels. Several of the home schooled parents interviewed felt frustration at the public school's opinion and support in enrolling their students. They felt the enrollment procedures and policies were discriminatory against home-schooled students. Consider one family's frustration after enrolling their oldest son in public school:

We decided to enroll our oldest son in the tenth grade at the local high school so that he could play sports and be prepared for life, but we wanted

to do it part-time, where he would go most of the day and then be allowed to come home to complete some of the home school curriculum we had been using for several years. However, the school counselor first of all gave us difficulty in enrolling him in high school classes and secondly refused to enroll him for part-time status. The on-line home school curriculum we used was fully accredited. So I went to the administration and asked them if they would accept students transferring in from neighboring school districts that were accredited and if so, why wouldn't they accept our son's credit from an accredited educational program? After having to go through discussions with school administration and the school board, my son finally received approval to be enrolled and receive credits for his freshman year and also to be enrolled part-time.

However, the frustration for this family did not stop there. They went through the same experience the following year when they enrolled their second child into the tenth grade:

After all we had gone through to get our oldest son accepted into public school and receive credit for what he had done at home school...we decided to enroll our next child into public school also when he reached the tenth grade so that he could participate in the school's activities and receive life-enriching experiences. And would you believe it? We ran into the same problem. The counselor was the bottleneck one more time. He again refused to give my second child any credit for the work done at home school. We had to go through the process again of contacting school administration and the school board. Again, the counselor was told to enroll my child and grant him the credit he had earned. The counselor just had it in his head that home schoolers didn't deserve their home school credits and placements. We had transcripts from the home school agency and test results from standardized tests and the counselor turned a blind eye to it all.

Ironically, in this case, both students actually became some of that public school's brightest and highest performing students in their respective classes. Another home school family, whose child, also was a consistent honor roll student and in the gifted program while in high school, experienced similar difficulties with enrollment:

The main concern we had when we placed our son in public school in the eighth grade as that people in the school would assume that since he was home schooled he would be ignorant, that he would be behind in his studies....and that is exactly what happened. When we went to enroll him,

the standardized tests we had been giving our son while we home schooled him showed him performing two grade levels above his placement....anyhow, when we showed the school the tests results and his grade records, the administrator didn't believe the information was credible and wanted to put our son in seventh grade. Our response was that you might even want to put him in ninth grade due to his achievement level. The administrator treated us like we were dumb. It wasn't until they got an official copy of his achievement tests that they finally realized how bright he was and even placed him in the gifted program. They actually considered putting him up a grade level, but our son wanted to stay with his own age group. The school finally responded appropriately, but their initial response was very condescending.

While the enrollment process appeared discriminatory for a few home school families, other families sensed that being a home-schooled student triggered some prejudices among public school staff and students. One home-schooled student shared her frustrations with the perceptions that educators and students at her public school appeared to exhibit toward her:

I think from the beginning they were skeptical of me. I had problems with people understanding what home schooling was all about. People thought all kinds of different myths about me....like she doesn't know how to read or she doesn't know how to talk to people...so I had to show them their thoughts were wrong. When I started high school the kids looked at me as being a dummy because I was home schooled. Now, since I help them with their home work, they realize I am one of the top students in the class. Now, they say I am a genius, an Einstein and that they don't need a calculator around when they have me.

In one other example, a parent shared how a blunt statement by a school teacher was intimidating to her as she prepared to put her children in public school:

It was not easy to put my child into public school because the environments are so different. And imagine how it made me feel when one school teacher told me 'I resent you keeping your kids at home—it makes me feel our jobs are not important'. How could I work with that kind of attitude? I didn't home school because I disliked that teacher. I had other reasons. Yet I felt like she had automatically made up her opinion of me and my home schooling efforts.



On the other hand, several parents and students mentioned how a positive reception by public schools made the transition smoother. One home school family said that their children did have a relatively easy time with the transition to public school, but part of that ease was attributed to a change in the school's administration and how the new administrator had a positive perception of home-schooled students. Another mother told how she was glad that the public school administration had changed hands when she decided to place her daughter back in public school:

When I decided to home school my daughter and pull her out of public school, the school administration at the time treated us with such disgust like perhaps I had lost my mind and didn't know what I was doing. The administrator had a definite bias and distaste for home schooling and let it be known. We had a home school friend who tried to enroll back in public school when this administrator was still with the district and she gave him a rough time and made it difficult for him. However, with the new administrator...well, he is very open to home schooling and supportive. Anyhow, my daughter had no troubles at all going back to public school. Since she had already gone to that school, she already knew some of the teachers and the students. The school made our transition very easy and we had no problems with enrollment or placing her in the appropriate classes.

A different home school family's transition reinforced the concept that a school administrator's perception and treatment of home-schooled students' enrollment can make the transition smoother. They commented on their transition experience:

We had a chance to talk to the superintendent before enrolling our children in public school and he was very open to us and even told us that he had thought of home schooling his own children at one time. It made us feel he understood us and that bridged a gap. We went into it thinking that we were being looked down upon and that we were being stereotyped, but the teachers for the most part were helpful...and the counselor was also very helpful.

Another parent shared how she dealt with two different administrations and had two different transitional experiences. The receptive administrator made her children's

transition better:

When I enrolled my kids into public school during their elementary years, it was like pulling teeth...the principal was anti-home school and did not want to work with me. She put my daughter back a grade from where she should have been. I tried to tell her we had learned everything they were going to teach her in second grade and part of what she would learn in third grade. But the principal wouldn't listen and my daughter wasted that year of school as she was bored to death. My kids are extremely gifted and that principal didn't trust my knowledge and expectations of my own children. However, later after we had home schooled for several more years, we moved to the country and this time when I went to enroll, they welcomed me with open arms. They even asked me what high school math class my daughter should be in since I knew her math capabilities. I was pleasantly surprised that they trusted me to know what my children could do.

In short, home schoolers felt very intimidated by public school personnel who appeared to exhibit a prejudice and negative reaction toward home schoolers; yet they were also put at ease by those school staff who welcomed them with an outstretched hand.

*Social adjustments to public school.* While the perceptions and attitudes of school personnel were one factor that contributed to the ease or difficulty of transition, another major issue surfaced as a transition issue: socialization or how well they were initially received by their peer group of students. Most of the home-schooled students had no problems with blending into the public school student population as these students already knew a lot of students either because they had previously gone to school there or they had extensive social interaction with the public school students in community activities.

However, not all home-schooled students "hit the ground running" when it came to successful social integration. One student, whose family had prepared her well for the

academics of high school, said she had no problems with the academic side of the transition to public school and even acknowledged her home school experience prepared her for relating to the adult teachers at school. However, she found that meeting her peers at public school was a stressful transition experience for her:

The funny thing was I remember really looking forward to going to public school, but it turned out to be extremely difficult that first year. I personally had a tough time with it...as my dad had spent a lot of time as a minister in the inner city and so I had a different perspective than a lot of kids in that small town we had moved to when I enrolled in public school. Being a minister's kid and having a "she's not from here" label put on me right away made me different. Right away, I was branded as different and I had a hard time fitting in. I had a hard time fitting in socially with those small town girls...I was sick a lot and didn't like school. Of course, I have to attribute some of my lack of socialization to my own experience. During home schooling, I became so close-knit with my family that I socialized with them more than children my age. I was much more comfortable interacting with adults than children my age.

Another student found that receiving peer approval was a big transition experience for him. While he was academically sound and a very good basketball player, one of his greatest difficulties in going to public school was the student response to him. They thought since he was a home-schooled student that he did not know much or that he could not play basketball. As he began to prove his peers wrong, their attitude toward him changed and he became successfully integrated into the social and academic structure of that high school.

*Unfamiliarity with school procedures.* Understanding some of the procedures and general school information was another area that made transition difficult for some home-schooled students. One student commented about his transition to public school during his middle school years, "When I first got there, I got confused where my classes were. But after I learned where my classes were, it got easier. I wished someone would have

shown me where my classes were beforehand....maybe have given me tour of the building.”

Another student, who had previously attended public school, returned to her local district as a high school freshman and had difficulty with some of the high school concepts, “I knew a lot of the students because I had gone to school in that district before, but I was kind of nervous because it was my first year of high school. I didn’t know what high school was like and would have liked to have had someone explain what credits were and the kind of classes I would have to take in high school”.

For these students, it was important they would have had an orientation the school’s layout and procedures. More information would have minimized their transitional anxieties.

*Academic Deficiencies.* One other area that influenced the transition to public school was the strength of the student’s academic background. As mentioned in the third finding in the preceding section and indicated on Table 4, family motivation to home school influenced the students’ academic preparedness in public school. Students from pedagogically motivated home schools tended to be better prepared academically for public school. Therefore, these students who had strong intellects and a good academic understanding were able to quickly gain the respect of teachers and students alike. These students were able to get involved in academic extra-curricular activities, make the honor roll, and even receive academic awards. However, students with weaker academic instruction during home school were usually put in some sort of remedial classes which impeded their social progress. The academic preparation and training received at home definitely influenced the transition experience for some in this study.

In summary of this finding, those respondents in this research who had the most difficult time transitioning to public school found the greatest difficulties in overcoming administrative prejudices while enrolling their students. Additional transitional difficulties resulted from academic deficiencies, breaking into the high school peer group, and understanding the procedures of the public school.

On the other hand, those who had a more positive, smooth transition to public schools typically already knew students in the high school peer group, had a strong academic background, and received supportive approval from public school officials.

#### *Home School Responsibility in Preparing for Transition*

Home school families who sent their children into the public schools realize that home school families have a major responsibility in helping their children with this move. The preparation for transition actually begins in the home and afterwards the public schools step into the picture. Information gathered from the families involved in this research showed that home schooling families can take the initiative in preparing their students for the move from home school to public school. The key areas to preparing for transition are strong academic and socialization exposure, becoming familiar with school resources, having organized home school records and test results, and of course, having a positive attitude toward the public schools.

*Positive attitude toward public education.* One of the most important things a home school family can do about enrolling their students into a public school is to be open-minded and receptive of the public school. Even though there are ideological and pedagogical reasons for sending children back to public schools (in which parents acknowledge their dependency upon the public school environment), some home school

parents can be a bit leery about sending their child to public school, even if it is out of necessity. However, research subjects said it is important that home schoolers have a positive attitude toward public schools.

Interestingly, I observed that families who home schooled for ideological reasons and then put their children back into public schools for academic help were the families most likely to be skeptical of the public schools. One ideologically motivated family explained the need for a positive attitude toward public schools:

Home schoolers need to be open-minded. Although we knew we had to put our children back into public school, we were nervous about it. The principal at the school encouraged us to be open-minded and they would be open-minded. We and he didn't want a relationship where we challenged one another, but rather worked for the common good of the student. It is important to realize your kids aren't perfect and the schools aren't perfect, but we are both working for the child's education.

For home school families to expect public schools to have an open-minded attitude toward home education, it is only right that home school families present a positive and understanding image of public education to their children. The subjects in this study felt that home schooled children should never see public education as the nemesis of home education---it is an alternative to home education.

*Socialization opportunities.* Another primary area of preparation for transition is making sure students have had a chance to build social skills with their peers and adults that may have diverse ideas from their own family values. As one parent said:

It is important to keep your child active...get them in activities like 4-H or through the home school associations. Parents have to keep their kids around their peers and in church with their friends. They are going to have to learn how to get along with other people and communicate with them. If you just keep them at home, they are not going to learn how to get along with others. I know one girl who was never around others and she had a hard time adjusting to other people.

One student, who felt she was socially isolated during her home school years, echoed the importance of social preparation for home schoolers transitioning to public school:

I think home school groups have to have a lot of social interaction among themselves and within the community...home schoolers need to be comfortable responding to their peer group...kids have to have interaction with one another. Parents really need to work on the social skills of their children before they go back to public school. I know this advice is colored by my own experience, but having stronger social skills would have helped me. Sometimes I think parents home school because they want absolute control over their children's lives, but that doesn't help them socially. For parents who are isolationists, their kids are going to be socially hurt.

Another home-schooled student also expressed the importance of building social skills:

I have met home schoolers in my area who don't know how to act in society and they don't know how to interact with people their own age, and it is that awkwardness that makes people "weirded" out by home schoolers and they think all home schoolers don't know how to socialize. Home school kids have to learn not to be social geeks and know how to go up to someone and say, "Hey, what's going on?" The only way to do this is to get involved in social activities. It is okay for parents to want to protect their kids, but they still have to teach their kids how to act with everyone, and how can you do that unless you are involved?

*Familiarization of the public school setting.* Research participants stated that another area of preparation is for parents to provide their children with an opportunity to see their new environment before starting public school. One family saw their role in preparing for transition this way, "We think parents should take the time to take their students and go visit and tour the school. It helps the children become more familiar with the school...possibly meet some of the teachers beforehand so the kids are not as nervous about going into a new environment with a new teacher."

Other home school families agreed that making sure their children had a chance to visit the public school before hand and meet school personnel was important. Part of that process includes explaining to children what public schools expect of them as well. One family emphasized, “One of the things we did is to discuss what teachers expect and be realistic about what kinds of things the kids will face or encounter while at public school. We made sure our kids knew they could communicate their adjustment and transition needs to us.”

*Adequate record-keeping and documentation.* Also, according to those subjects involved in this research, it is important that parents have documentation of their children’s work and academic progress. Accurate attendance records, grade sheets and transcripts, along with standardized testing results are all beneficial to present the public school administration when attempting to enroll a child in public school. Home schoolers do themselves a serious disservice by having poor or no documentation at all. Several parents indicated in this research that home school families themselves should have self-regulatory mechanisms in place that include accurate and up-to-date record keeping and test results that validate their home school efforts.

In summary of this finding, home school families all acknowledge their responsibility in preparing students for the public school transfer. Several families admitted they should have taken more initiative in promoting a positive attitude toward public schools, keeping accurate records and documentation, becoming familiar with the public school facilities, or providing socialization opportunities for their students.

#### *Public School Transitional Assistance*

During the research, respondents offered ways they think public schools could



have helped their transition to these same public schools. Based upon their experiences, these families believed certain behaviors on the part of the public school either did make their transition positive or could have helped make the transition better. Participants listed the public school's positive acceptance of home schoolers, a school orientation, and an easy enrollment process as ways that public schools can assist home-schooled students with transition.

*Positive perception of home-schooled students.* First, in order to help home-schooled students with transition, respondents stated that public schools could exhibit a tolerant perception of home schooling and view home schooling as a legitimate form of education. The families in this research wanted public school leaders to know that home schooling has been an effective and enjoyable experience for many home school families. Most families who home school and transfer to public school had a positive experience with home schooling. As one family stated, the transfer to public school is not so much out of exasperation with home schooling, but the realization that public schools had more to offer:

Home schooling was very positive for my daughter and she was caught up to speed [in her education], becoming a very good reader and student. So when we decided to put her back in public school, it wasn't because home schooling was ineffective. It was very effective, but we felt there were some social opportunities that the public school would provide her that we could not offer. So when many home school parents put their children into public school, it is not due to dissatisfaction with home schooling, but rather the search for other opportunities for their children.

As mentioned previously, many of the home-schooled students involved in this research identified bias by public school administrators and counselors as their biggest transition hurdle. Socialization and familiarity with the public school

environment were not as major a transitional concern among both home-schooled students and parents as the perceptions and attitudes of public school personnel they encountered. One parent emphasized the need for acceptance of home schoolers:

Public schools need to respect the students and parents...especially when the parents have solid information about the student's performance. It set an awkward tone for our child and us to be received with such negativity and skepticism when we tried to enroll. It is a huge leap for a home school family to send their child to public school, and for us we had been so intimately involved in our child's education, and for whatever reasons we are sending him back to public school, we are entrusting our child to the care of that school. So when the initial interaction is negative, it is not a good way to start. We need to feel like we can trust public schools, because that is what we are doing...entrusting our students to other adults.

Several home school families mentioned they understand why public schools officials may have a negative view of home schooling: a few families who do a very poor job of home schooling paint a negative picture of the whole movement. Yet these same families feel this bias is unfair to them. One parent commented:

We know that there are families out there who do nothing for their kids in the name of home schooling them. But the majority of families are doing a good job. But just like there are rotten home school families out there, so there are really bad public schools and really bad public school teachers out there, and public schools don't seem to question the students who transfer to their school after being in a bad public school or being taught by a bad public school teacher. Public schools don't look at some of these kids and say "Wow, you came to us from that public school in that city and we know they are lousy school district, so we are going to put you in fifth grade instead of sixth grade". However, it seems like some public school officials have no problem automatically assuming that all home-schooled students are academically deficient, and then question these families where to place their kids or what credit to give them.

Along with this line of thinking, home school families do not want to be perceived as social outcasts. Most of the home school families involved in this research felt that public schools automatically condemn home schooling for its lack of

socialization. Yet these home school families felt this is a false generalization to make.

While there are home school families which may be isolated and reclusive, the “socialization” issue is one that irks many home school families. One parent had this comment:

I think the socialization issue is blown way out of proportion with a lot of people in the teaching profession. Most of our children really do get a lot of socialization...they get it with a wide variety of places, with adults, with their churches, at 4-H, with the Scouts...I think some people think that just because they are not in the classroom everyday with their peers that they are not learning to socialize. I think that is a wrong perception. Actually our son was better adjusted than most of his peers. He could relate better to his teachers and other adults than most students his age. He related well to older people and was not intimidated by being around older individuals. I think that there is a small group of home schoolers who are reclusive, but for the most part home schoolers do a lot of social events and meet people at different places and meet other students and adults. For us, we laughed at people who brought up the socialization issue. The key is how reclusive a family wants to be. There are a few home schoolers who are reclusive and it gives the rest of the home schoolers a bad reputation. Just about everyone we know has made a conscious effort to make sure that their students are involved in different social activities.

One of the students pointed out that students who take advantage of their home school experience to build social skills have an advantage:

I didn't have a problem with socialization. As a home schooler, I was able to travel with my grandmother all over the world and I got to learn to deal with all kinds of people of all ages. I was also very involved in community activities, and so I didn't depend upon the school system to provide my socialization skills. I was not shy when I went to public school. I didn't fit in with some of the groups at school and I had to work at adjusting to all the profanity, immaturity, and inappropriate behavior of some of my peers, but I never had a problem talking to people or introducing myself. I met a lot of people and made lots of friends.

Another home-schooled student added that the socialization misconception about home-educated students is unfair. She said that she may have been branded a “social outcast” by school staff, but in reality she did not want to be associated with a lot of her

public school peers' sophomoric behavior:

While I made lots of friends at school and eventually earned acceptance by my peers, I think many people saw me as a bit "out of the loop". But it wasn't that I was not socially adept with my peers, it is just that I did not mingle with a lot of them because I saw much of their behavior as immature and juvenile. I mean, I came from an environment where there was no cursing, no profanity, no major disrespect for authority and then all of a sudden I am thrust into an environment with people my age who are full of disrespect and profanity. I was not comfortable hanging out with all of that immaturity. So for some one to judge me as socially maladjusted would be wrong...I just chose not to get involved with all the stupidity of my peers. If anyone had mannerly, competent socialization skills, I think I fit into that category better than many of my peers.

Home-schooled students and their parents said they want to be accepted. They do not want to be viewed as aliens or some strange reclusive family. Many home schoolers have strong educational backgrounds or a strong desire to succeed academically. While there may be those home school families who are reclusive, or as one parent put it...families who are "isolationists" rather than "insulationists" (parents who hide their kids from society rather than try to prepare their kids for society), the majority of home school families provide ample socialization opportunities for their children. One minister in this study said he personally knew fifteen families in his religious association who home schooled, and of those fifteen families, twelve of them were doing an outstanding job. He acknowledged, however, that the three remaining families were hurting their children by their lack of academic effort and reclusive mannerisms.

*Providing orientation and support to school facilities and services.* Going along with the idea of accepting the home-schooled student's educational background, study participants stated that home-schooled students have orientation and procedural needs that need to be addressed. Home-schooled students want to know room locations, school

rules, credit requirements, and other procedures. As one home-schooled student said, “I don’t even think the public school even thought about helping a home schooled kid...it was like just putting me in there with the rest of the kids, throwing me into the mix and they figured I’d survive.”

Depending upon the home school environment, home-educated children may need an additional boost from the school. Home schoolers are not a homogenous group—they have unique needs based upon their home schooling experience. For example, some of the students will enter school with a degree of social timidity and may need assistance in developing a new peer group. Some enter public school with exceptional academic and intellectual abilities and may need to be quickly integrated into honor and college track programs. Other home-schooled students have serious academic deficiencies that need remediation without parents feeling judged or condemned for the weak teaching provided in the home school. Just about all home-schooled students needed information from the school about graduation requirements, course descriptions, locations of classes and other general school information. One student’s transitional needs for going to public school were simple, “I could have had someone show me where my classes were...maybe had a tour of the building. That would have been helpful.” Several home school families indicated the need for the public school hosting an orientation for students and parents.

*An expedited enrollment process.* Home schoolers also indicated that public schools could make transition easier by having an organized enrollment process. Most of the home school families had major problems with getting their students enrolled at proper grade levels or in getting their children credits for coursework already completed at home. While home school families all realized the uniqueness of the home-schooled

student's education experience, they felt that documentation such as report cards, attendance records, and testing scores should all be taken seriously in enrolling the child. "If there is credible documentation regarding a child's ability, schools should trust the parents in placing a student," said one parent.

A number of families also added that a standardized placement test could ease any transitional tensions of the enrollment process. Most of the home school families interviewed were open to a standardized evaluation that the public school could give to validate the student's academic ability. One parent mentioned:

I think it would have helped if the school would have tested each of our children right at enrollment to see what levels they were performing at before starting school. Then we could have made sure they were ready for that grade level. It was only later on when the kids were struggling in school that they decided to evaluate them and they found gaps in the kids' learning and some serious testing at enrollment might have identified that right away.

Another family chimed in with their support of a standardized test to place home-schooled students if the public school felt it was necessary:

I think if schools have questions about a child's ability they should have some sort of entrance exam to go for the student...most home-schooled students would have no problem with that and would be glad to see how their student performs by public school standards. Schools should consider the information and test results the parents have about the child, but if they feel it is absolutely necessary, they should have a placement test ready to go.

In summary, home-schooled students and parents felt the public schools could make the transition better by first of all accepting home schoolers as legitimate students, by understanding the home school movement, by providing orientation programs to the school facilities and programs, and by making the enrollment process smoother.

### *Parental Desire to Stay Active in Child's Education*

All families interviewed in this research said the greatest component of home schooling was the close relationships and bonding that took place between the parent and child. One former home-schooled student said "I loved my mom as a teacher. She was very smart and I learned a lot from her." These family members had spent considerable time together and the result was a tightly woven relationships. Parents (typically the mother) were involved in planning, delivering the curriculum, and evaluation of their student's learning and personal development.

One parent summarized her family involvement this way, "We were the principal and the teacher. And in home schooling, kids know that education is important because we as parents are so involved and so interested in how our kids are doing." Another parent, a single mother, emphasized the involvement she had with her four home schooled children: she had spent ten years as a home school mom and had even personally written each child's curriculum for four of those years.

So obviously, with students going off to public school, the degree of parental involvement was impacted. Yet, how did parental involvement change?

According to the students and parents in this research, parental involvement in the child's education changed primarily in terms of relinquishing curriculum presentation to the public schools and in the amount of individual time spent with the student. One mother summarized the transformation of parental involvement this way, "Sure my involvement has changed...I am still there to be the helper, but I am not the teacher any more."

However, home school parents still maintained a heavy involvement in their

child's education, frequently conversing with teachers, checking their student's school work to make sure it was complete and comprehended. As one parent said:

We are still very involved. We sit down and help our son with his home work. I go up to the school sometimes and see what the kids are doing. We call the teachers to get updates on the kids...I like that the responsibility is off our shoulders and on the teachers, so we try to stay in touch with them. The kids like for us to be involved.

Other parents commented on how they have a great interest in tracking their students' performance and learning, going to all their children's activities, and expecting respectful behavior from their children. Parents and students both agreed parental involvement was still very active, even at the high school level, when most parents of public school students tend to lessen their involvement with their children. However, as one parent said, "We were heavily involved with educating our children and will continue to be. I would think most home school parents will offer schools the greatest support because they want their kids to succeed and are willing to work with the schools to see that their children are successful."

Parents of home-schooled students seemed to be very motivated and very willing to participate in their child's education at public school. Such parents could very well be a public school's greatest supporters and cheerleaders.

### *Summary*

In this chapter, I have reviewed and analyzed my findings from the data collected from participating home school parents and students. This study has supported the pedagogical/ideological basis for home schooling and has also identified that parents send their home schoolers to public school for pedagogical or ideological reasons. The pedagogical/ideological basis for home schooling can impact student transition to public



school by its adequate or inadequate academic preparation. Also this study found that home school families need to socially, academically, and perceptually prepare for transition to public schools. Another finding was that since perceived public school prejudice or acceptance is the biggest transitional concern of home schoolers, it is important that public schools develop an accommodating and open-minded reception of home school transfers. Finally, home school parents have been very involved in their child's education and wish to remain involved.

## Chapter 5--Conclusions and Implications

The seven major findings of this study create “talking points” that can be addressed by further research and discussion. These major “talking points” of my research are:

1) This research affirms that people home school for pedagogical and ideological reasons.

2) This research identifies that people send their children back into the public schools for pedagogical and ideological reasons.

3) This research predicts that people who home school for primarily pedagogical reasons are most likely to transfer their students to public schools for ideological reasons, and people who home school primarily for ideological reasons are most likely to place their children into public schools for pedagogical reasons, and that these motivations can impact the quality of the transition experience.

4) This research suggests that dealing with the negative perception of home schooling by public school personnel is the most difficult part of transition from home school to public school, and acceptance by school personnel is the greatest transitional asset for home school families.

5) This research found that home school families acknowledge they have a responsibility in preparing for public school transition.

6) This research indicates how public schools can develop positive mindsets toward home schooling and provide orientation procedures and an easier enrollment process.

7) This research emphasizes that home school parents want to stay actively involved in their children's education.

All of these ideas give a clearer understanding to the purpose of this research and its questions. Having discussed these findings in Chapter 4 of this research, I would like to turn my attention to some conclusions drawn from my own observations, and then I will also provide some practical implications gathered from the findings and from the observations of the data I gathered.

First, I will make some conclusions through the framework of transition and how home-schooled students who transfer to public school fall into this framework. Then I will follow in the implications section with guidelines for home school families and public schools in preparing for transition. I will wrap up this chapter with identification of further areas for research.

### *Conclusions*

After gathering and analyzing data, I had a better grasp of the home school movement and a better understanding of the transitional experience of home schooled families and students who go back to public school. This transition of home school to public school does involve what Bruffee (1999) calls the *reacculturation* of community values where one community meets another...in this case the boundary line where the culture of home school meets the culture of mass education. Since home-schooled students are choosing to cross over the boundary to public education, there is a definite reacculturation and perhaps a bit of a "culture shock" (Dacey & Travers, 1991; Eggleston & Lanaan, 2001; Berger & Malaney, 2003) that takes place.

The families involved in this research essentially fit the demographics of the

typical home school family according to research---two-parents, middle class, Caucasian, and conservative Christian (Bauman, 2002; Ray, 2003). The low number of bachelor degrees was the only typical demographic quality that my research subjects did not possess. My study could not validate the research that nearly half of all home school parents have bachelor degrees (Newcomb, 2001; Bauman, 2002). This could be attributed to the fact that participants in my study were rural home school families and could not access higher education as readily as suburban or urban home school families.

Nevertheless, the values of the home school setting—stable two-parent family, middle class income, high parental involvement, and strong religious nature—created a culture that was markedly different from the culture of the general public school population. This difference marked the point where reacculturation of the small, insular, moral environment had to adjust to the larger, secular, value-diverse system of public education.

This transition involves willingness on the part of both home school communities and public school communities to collaborate and understand one another's differences and similarities. Transition involves understanding the differences in communities. Like all communities, each has its own set of mores, values, rules, and goals that are typically accepted by its members (Bruffee, 1999) and transition becomes effective as each community can negotiate its differences where the community boundaries connect (Bruffee, 1999). So for home-schooled students to have a positive transition to public school, there must be dialogue and collaboration between home schools and public schools to understand one another, or what Bruffee (1999) calls learning to translate one another's cultural language.

Since public schools are the recipients of transferring home-schooled students, the leadership in these public institutions should take the lead in creating this dialogue and collaboration. Public school leaders should possess a participative leadership style in which they encourage participation from home school families, listen to their views and ideas without becoming defensive and try to utilize home school suggestions and deal with home school concerns (Yukl, 2002).

However, the responsibility of having a positive transitional experience does not fall solely on the public schools—both public schools and home schooling parents have duties in ensuring that home-schooled students who enter public school have the best transitional and educational experience possible. The following section provides practical guidelines for home school families and public schools in handling home-schooled student transition to public school and addresses practical ways to improve that transition experience. The key is to have a structured, organized transition process (Gage & Berliner, 1988) which makes the move less stressful.

### *Implications*

While this research has provided greater insight and depth to understanding the transitional experience of home-schooled students who transfer to public school, I believe it is also important to not only increase knowledge about the transitional experience—this knowledge must be put to use. In this section, I would like to address practical responses to assist in home school transition to public school. As a public school administrator, I believe the public school has a great responsibility in meeting these transitional needs. However, I also feel that this research uncovered ways that home school families themselves can prepare their students for transition. Therefore, I will address how home

school families can do their part to assist public schools in making the transition from home school to public school easier. Both home schools and public schools share in easing the transition—there is a sort of “passing the baton” that occurs between home school and public school responsibility in addressing this student transition. After I address practical ways for home school families to prepare for transition, I will provide information that will help public schools address student transitional needs.

### *Parental Role in Preparing Students for Transition*

Parents have the initial responsibility for preparing a child for public school transition. The information, training, and perceptions taught at home will set the ground work for an easier transition. From the qualitative data I collected in this research, I identified five key components in preparing home-schooled students for transition. Table 7 provides an overview of the home school family’s responsibilities in preparing students for transition.

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Table 7  
Responsibilities of Home School Families in Transition Preparation

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This research identified the following responsibilities that home school families have in preparing their students for transition to public school

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1. Provide a structured, academically sound home school environment.
2. Involve students in community-based social groups and activities to provide social growth and interaction.
3. Maintain detailed record-keeping of grades and attendance and ensure that child takes an annual nationally normed test.
4. Have a positive mindset toward public education. Home schooling should be done for personal benefit---it is seen as a better means of education, not as a

vendetta or criticism of public education.

5. Pursue part-time public school enrollment. Involving home-schooled students in public education, even part-time, is a great way to provide a smooth transition experience.

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*Provide a strong academic setting.* First of all, parents need to be honest and forthright about their motives and abilities to home school. While parents who were pedagogically motivated to home school their children had the curricular, structural, and support systems in place to provide their child with solid academic instruction had successful home school experiences, other families did not. A couple of families interviewed had neither the educational background nor the ability to initiate, much less maintain, an academically conducive home school environment. These families actually hurt their students in making the transition to public school because of academic deficiencies.

My observation is that families who home school primarily for ideological reasons have the greatest chance of hurting their children academically. With ideology, the emphasis is on morals, values, and religious beliefs, and perhaps academics takes a bit of a back seat—this is part of the reason why the children of ideologues sometimes may not be as academically prepared—academics was not the primary focus for home schooling.

Home schooling is hard work and to make it work effectively, parents must be willing to put forth the time, effort, and preparation. As one home school parent said, “Home schooling is very time consuming and requires a lot of energy—you have to have a schedule and you have to be prepared. This may seem to be the greatest negative of

home schooling for a parent, yet you have to go into it with the attitude of making it work. It is worth it just to build that relationship with your child.”

Parents need to have a home school structure and curriculum solidly within their grasp before starting to home school. An unstructured, undisciplined approach will academically hurt their children, regardless of the nobility of one’s motives in home schooling. Parents who do not have the regiment, information, support, and materials necessary to home educate their children should reconsider their desire to home school until such components are in place. Otherwise, like families in this research, they will be sending their students back to public school—students who are unprepared for the academics of public education and who may need remediation.

*Provide engaging socialization opportunities.* Secondly, parents must provide their home-schooled students with ample opportunities for community involvement and social experiences. The home schooling experience actually should provide students with more opportunities for socialization as there is more flexibility in a student’s day, allowing for activities that could build interaction among people of all age groups. Home-schooled students can easily participate in community youth groups and athletic events, allowing for peer interaction. There are other civic and service opportunities that would allow for interaction with adults as well. There is a definite social disadvantage in being a reclusive home school family. Students who are sheltered from the world around them have a difficult time relating to that “real” world when they are finally exposed to it. One former home-schooled student described the impact of the culture shock from home school to public school, “Home schooling has the potential to shield you from the real world, and then when you have to face the real world....POW! Things land on you at



once.”

There are plenty of socialization opportunities available for home schooled students: church youth groups, 4-H, scout troops, community athletics and performing arts groups. Most areas even have active home school associations which take frequent field trips and also have athletic and academic teams.

*Maintain thorough documentation.* A third prong to the parental responsibility in preparing their children for a public school transfer is meticulous and thorough record-keeping. Several home school families acknowledged the importance of maintaining detailed attendance and grade reports, as well as testing students annually with a nationally normed assessment. Copies of students’ work and a portfolio of projects should also be kept to present to the public school enrollment official as documentation of a student’s learning and development. Several families in this study mentioned how thorough record keeping was a great advantage in creating positive rapport with public school administrators.

*Have a receptive mind toward public education.* A fourth responsibility that home school parents have in preparing their children for public school is developing a positive family mindset toward the public schools. Although there may have been perceived deficiencies in the public school that motivated families to begin home schooling in the first place, any prejudices or condescension toward public schools must be removed so that students can enter their new educational surroundings with an open mind. Parents should instill that each educational practice (home schooling and public education) have their different philosophical and practical approaches, but that each method is beneficial in its own right.

Another aspect of developing a positive mindset toward education is to respectfully recognize the differences in the home school/ public school educational dichotomy. Parents need to point out how the cultures are different. Parents need to prepare their students in some of the various behaviors, attitudes, and language they will confront in public school. Public schools are definitely a different world than home school....public school students may use profanity, vulgarity, and indulge in behaviors that home-schooled students have not been exposed to, but parents need to remind students that these are individual student behaviors and not a reflection of the public school philosophy. Although there may be some “bad” students in public schools, that does not mean that public schools are bad...they are just another mode of educational delivery.

*Pursue part-time attendance at a public school.* Additionally, several families in this study encouraged home school families to enroll their students part-time into advanced high school courses. Two families in this study did just that—home school most of the time and attend public school part time. They said this was a great advantage in creating comfort and familiarity in their students as they began to take more high school classes and eventually enroll full-time at public school. Part-time attendance is probably the most effective way to acclimate students to the broader culture of public education. More schools are becoming open to part-time enrollment by home-schooled students.

#### *The Public School’s Role in Preparing Students for Transition*

Since there are home-schooled students who transfer into public schools, it makes sense for public schools to increase their understanding of home schooling so that they

can provide a smooth transition from the home to the public school setting. Just as home schooling parents must prepare their children who transfer to public schools, so public schools have a responsibility to do their part to pave a smooth path of transition. Again, from the data I collected on the home school transition experience, I was able to identify five main areas that public schools can better serve home school transition. Table 8 provides an overview of the public school's responsibilities in preparing home-schooled students for transition.

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Table 8  
Responsibilities of Public Schools in Transition Preparation

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This research identified the following responsibilities that public schools have in preparing home-schooled students for transition to public school

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1. Avoid negative perceptions of home schools. See home schooling as a legitimate alternative to public education, just as normal as private or parochial schools.
  2. Provide a user-friendly enrollment process for home-schooled students and allow credit for properly documented achievement
  3. Encourage input and involvement from home school parents within the public school setting. Most home school parents are energized, willing to help, and highly involved in their students lives and can provide that same inspiration to public schools.
  4. Provide a school liaison that could oversee the enrollment, orientation, and follow-up in the home-schooled student's transition to public school.
  5. Encourage part-time enrollment and participation by home-schooled students living within the school district.
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*Keep a receptive attitude toward home-schooled students.* Initially, public school officials and teaching staff need to familiarize themselves with the home school

movement, keeping an open mind. Understanding the life structure and culture of people is imperative to reducing stress in transition (Levinson, 1977). Too often public school personnel assume that home schooling is an anomaly, an aberration of education, and there is a negative view of home school parents and students. My research affirmed such negative perceptions as several participants in the study mentioned negative perceptions on the part of administrators, teachers, counselors, or even other students as one of the biggest transition obstacles they faced.

Having been part of the public education establishment for nearly twenty years, I have come to the realization that many of the misunderstandings that public school personnel have regarding home schooling is either a bit exaggerated or a myth. For example, most home school families do not home educate because they are angry with the school or are socially reclusive or have “right-wing extremists” tendencies---they have legitimate ideological or pedagogical reasons to do so (Van Galen, 1991; Romanowski, 2001; Nemer, 2002). All of the families in this research said they had a good experience with home schooling, citing the amount of time spent building relationships with their children, the ability to monitor their child’s educational growth, the ability to be creative in preparing and teaching lessons, and the flexibility of the schedule as advantages of home schooling.

Home school families want to be understood by public school leaders. One parent stressed the importance of understanding the home school movement:

Public schools need to become educated about us. They need to know what is good and bad and what some of these families will be bringing to their public schools. On one hand, they will get home schoolers who are academically sound, who are so much more socially mature than many of their present students, who have the respect and manners that they do not expect from their own students. On the other hand, some home schoolers

will come to public school very ill-prepared, hardly able to read, socially backward and shy. Public school leaders should realize they are there to help us and learn how to deal with us and what we are like.

Several other parents in this study commented how the home schooling experience gave their children the independence, confidence, and self-esteem necessary to be successful in public school. Their students learned to work on their own, were accountable for having passing marks in order to move on in their lessons, and received invaluable parental support that gave them confidence to learn. One parent shared this anecdote about her home schooled children:

My children learned to be independent and to ask questions about anything they needed help with. They learned not to be afraid to ask questions. I recently had one of my daughter's seventh grade teachers come to me and say that it is very rare for a student to stay after class and after school to ask questions. Yet, the teacher said that my daughter did just that. She praised the fact that my daughter had one-on-one attention and learned how to ask questions.

Although all public school educators may not find home schooling palatable to their educational tastes, they can begin to see that home schooling is a legal and legitimate means of educating children, even if in some cases it is not the most effective. There truly needs to be an acknowledgement on the part of public schools that "one size does not fit all" and that public schools are incapable of meeting some students' needs. While it is humbling to admit one's weaknesses, public schools may not always provide the best individualized instruction methods, and they certainly cannot provide the moral, spiritual, or inspirational guidance and instruction that some parents find essential for their children. So public schools cannot do it all and should not feel threatened that parents choose to home school children for purposes that are beyond the public schools' jurisdiction. Once public school educators accept that home schools are true alternatives

to mass education, perhaps the bridge of understanding between the two educational modes can be reinforced.

One home-schooled student had this advice for public schools receiving home educated students into their facilities:

I think one thing is that most officials in public school are strong in their belief that public schools are the only right way. They need to understand that a lot of home schoolers excel far beyond the typical public school graduate...for many in public schools, the high school diploma is all they get and then they stop learning. I think they need to understand that we home schoolers do know what we are doing...we are going on and getting our education beyond high school. We tend to do well in high school and beyond. They need to realize that there is more than one way to skin a cat.

Public school officials can receive training in why parents decide to home school their children, learn the pros and cons of home schooling and then also see the research that validates the effectiveness of some home school programs. This exposure could provide insight into the home schooling movement, easing any misconceptions about it. Home schooling is not out to take over public education; home schooling is essentially a mode of education for families who feel they have a different way to educate their children. The home school families involved in this research did not want public schools to see them as a threat or competitor to mass education, but rather an alternative method of education.

*Have a positive enrollment process.* Once public educators can see home schooling in a tolerant light, they can begin to work with students and parents who make the choice to go to public school. They can simplify the enrollment process and provide an orientation to public school life. One practical method of validating the practice of home schooling is for public school enrollment officers to actually take the time to visit

home schoolers who enroll in public school. Officials can find out why families home schooled, what were the positive and negative experiences, what kind of content was learned, check for documentation of learning, and get an idea of the academic and social maturity of each student. A family interview could actually provide a good basis for determining placement and identifying social, emotional, or orientation needs of transitioning students. One parent gave this advice:

Public schools can be accepting and interested in what home schoolers have done. Ask them “What have you done with your home schooling experience?” This is how they are going to learn about us. This is how they are going to know our needs. Just talk to us. Public schools need to make us feel happy to have us...not suspicious of us. We want to feel accepted and part of the program.

As previously mentioned, most home school families are open to a standardized entrance examination to confirm grade placement and educational needs if the public school feels it is necessary. As one family stated, “We think it would have helped us if the school had just tested each of our kids initially to see what levels they were performing at before starting school and that way we would know they were at the right grade level. It was not until later that we found out where the gaps were in our kids learning and some serious testing might have identified that right away.”

However, home school families who have strong documentation of academic performance and nationally normed achievement test results would also appreciate school officials receiving such information without putting parents through an inquisition or act with suspicion and doubt. During the enrollment process, the parents in this research were very understanding of public school skepticism, especially in the case where there is poor evidence and documentation of student academic success; however, such families

would like to have the trust of public schools as well. Home school families need public schools to acknowledge the validity of successful home school efforts (especially when there is solid documentation to indicate student achievement) and then have both the school and parents set high expectations for those students to continue to achieve.

Public schools can also continue to monitor the progress of home schooled children. From the subjects in this research, most of the home-schooled students went on to be very successful in public school; and of course, some needed remediation. However, in all cases home schooled families would appreciate public schools pushing the high achieving student and also quickly providing remediation for those students ill-prepared for public school curriculum.

*Encourage parental involvement.* Public schools should also tap into the parental support and involvement that is readily found among parents who have home schooled. As public schools work with home school parents, they will probably discover that such parents can be some of the school's biggest supporters as they are heavily involved in overseeing their children's performance, are willing to volunteer for school functions, and tend to expect their students to be respectful of teachers and administrators. These parents have indicated by their willingness to home school that they are sincerely interested in their children's welfare and want to work with the schools for what is best for their children.

*Provide a home school-public school liaison.* One family in this research brought up the idea of a public school-home school liaison officer. This part-time administrative duty would allow for the school to have a contact person who could work with home schoolers to ease into transition and then work with parents to oversee the success of the



students. Having a contact person through whom communication between public and home school would flow could prove to be most helpful. The liaison could be the one person who could set up necessary programs to make sure home schooled children's needs are being addressed. As one family in this research stated, "It would really help if teachers knew a home-schooled student was coming to school if there was some way they could reach out to them [the home-schooled student] beforehand and get to know them and introduce themselves...maybe a meeting before school just to get to know each other better."

The school liaison could also set up programs for home school families who want to home school part-time and go to public school classes part time. Public schools in the southern/central Missouri area are catching on to the idea of students attending part-time while home schooling part-time. Two school districts from sizeable communities have recently agreed to work with home school families in this research to allow their students to go part-time, taking classes that parents feel uncomfortable teaching at home. While initially public schools seemed to balk at the part-time idea, through conversations with these home school families the part-time enrollment became acceptable. A school liaison could actually visit home school associations and work with these families with a part-time public school program that would help bridge the gap between public and home schools.

School liaisons could also develop individualized programs to meet home-schooled student needs. For example, students who come to public school with serious socialization issues can be assisted by the liaison in developing mentoring, peer tutoring, and other social grouping activities that could help the student overcome social obstacles.

Additionally, the liaison could also hook up home-schooled students who have academic deficiencies with remediation or special education services upon enrolling in public school. The liaison could also be responsible for providing an orientation program for parents and students to familiarize them with the public schools policies, expectations, facilities, and services.

*Encourage part-time attendance.* Finally, public schools should work with the home school community and encourage part-time attendance at public schools—whether it is one hour or half the school day. Part-time attendance by home-schooled students tends to lead to full time attendance by those same students and schools will greatly enhance that student’s transition to full-time enrollment at a public school.

In the state of Missouri, the idea of part-time attendance for home-schooled students is attracting attention. Two of the families interviewed had sent their students to public school part-time. Both of the schools involved were in larger communities in central/south central Missouri. While the families mentioned some hesitation on the part of the schools, they acknowledged that the schools accepted their students on a part-time basis.

A dilemma of part-time status is whether to count home school credit towards high school credit. Schools may want to seriously consider if the family has adequate documentation and achievement test scores. Such documentation could suffice, especially if a public school accepts credits from other private educational programs.

In summary, public schools and home school families can work together to make the transition for home-schooled students smoother. For such ease in transition, both public and home schools need to develop tolerant views of each other and recognize that

each educational mode has its strengths and weaknesses. They need to recognize the differences in their cultures and find common ground. Parents need to work to prepare their students both academically and socially for public schools, and public schools need to take the time to identify the academic and social strengths and deficiencies of home schooled children on an individual basis. Public schools should also tap into the reserve of parental support and involvement that is inherent with home school families and encourage part-time home school attendance.

*For Further Study*

While this research shed light upon reasons home schooling families decide to transfer back to public schools and what their transitional concerns and needs were, there is much further study that this research creates.

First, I primarily dealt with families from rural central and south central Missouri. Further research could look at other parts of the country or perhaps even suburban and urban areas. While there may have been some reluctance upon the part of some families in the research to send their children back to public schools, many of the families had no problems with the public schools in and off themselves, because they felt the schools in these rural areas of the state basically supported some of the traditional and perhaps, even conservative views of these families. It would be interesting to note if home schoolers in suburban or urban areas feel that larger public schools would share some of their same values. The assumption is that any tension between family and public school values would increase the chances of family reluctance in sending children into the public schools.

Another area for further study would be research into the types of curriculum that

the families of successful home schooled children used. While the families who did a poor job of home schooling seemed to struggle to find an effective curriculum and appeared to do a hit-and-miss approach to teaching their children, the families who were successful indicated that they had found and implemented programs and instructional materials that definitely were effective in teaching their children. A study into what curriculums are most effective out of the diversity of home school programs that are on the market would prove to be a valuable study.

An additional area of study would include researching the personal qualities of families who had successful home school programs and had students better fitted to enroll in public school. One observation I noted was that the families whose children were quite successful in public school exuded confidence, self-discipline, high motivation, parental educational attainment, and social prowess versus those few families who exhibited introversion, lack of organization, and lower educational level. Such information could provide both public schools and home school associations with information that could prove valuable in identifying families that have a greater chance of creating successful home school programs and students with greater adaptability to public schools.

### *Summary*

In conclusion, home schooling is a segment of American education. The home schooling movement has grown in numbers and sophistication. While the purpose of this research was not to promote or debunk home schooling, it was the purpose of my research to investigate the experiences of home schooled families who make the choice to go to public school. There are definite transitional needs as students move from the

smaller subculture of home education to the larger culture of mass education. The home school families and public schools can work together to reduce the stress and anxiety associated with the transition from the simple, insulated environment of home schooling to the larger, complex, diverse world of public education. It is my hope that the qualitative data and analysis provided by my research can help public education officials better understand the transitional experience of home-schooled students and implement philosophies and programs into the public school setting to assist with this transition.

Appendix 1  
Informed Consent for Parent Participation

Dear Parent:

Would you be willing to help a student from the University of Missouri-Columbia conduct research on home schooling? The research will focus on how public schools can better help home-schooled students who decide to move back into public schools. We are asking that both you and your child help us with this research.

\*You and your child may choose to participate in this study if you wish. You do not have to be part of the research.

\*If you agree to be part of this study, you and your child will participate by filling out a survey and then answering questions during a semi-structured interview that will be conducted in person (or if necessary, over the phone). We would like for you and your child to be together during the research. The approximate time for completing the survey and interview should be around 45 minutes.

\*If at any time you or your child decide you want to stop helping with the research, you are free to stop answering questions and any information you or your child provide will be immediately destroyed by a paper shredder.

\*Any information you or your child provide will be confidential. Although the information may be used in a published paper presented to the University of Missouri-Columbia or an educational magazine, your name and identity will not be revealed.

\*Any information gathered from you or your child will be stored in a locked place for a period of three (3) years following the study. At the end of three years, all information will be destroyed by paper shredder.

\*You or your child are welcome to ask for any help from the researcher if you do not understand a research question.

\*If you would like for your child and you to help with this study, please sign your name on the line below. You will receive a copy of this permission form.

If you have any questions or comments you are welcome to contact the researcher listed below or his University of Missouri advisor.

***Research Student:***

Jeff Koonce  
12411 Maries Road 607  
Dixon, MO 65459  
(573)855-0918

***University of Missouri-Columbia Advisor:***

Dr. Jay Scribner  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
Columbia, MO 65211  
(573)884-1708

For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus IRB, 483 McReynolds Hall, Columbia, MO 65211. Their phone number is 573-882-9585 or you mail email them at [umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu)

Thank you for your help.

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I agree to help with this research on how public schools can better serve home-schooled students who move back into public school. By signing below, I agree to answer questions on a survey and during an interview. I also give permission for my child to help with the survey and be interviewed. I am allowed to be present with my child during the research.

I understand my name and my child's name will not be used in the research. I or my child can quit answering questions at any time. I know that the information I or my child give will be stored in a safe place and will be destroyed within three years after this research is presented. I know that I or my child can ask for help at any time.

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Signature

---

Date

## Informed Consent for Student Participation

Hello!

Would you like to help answer a few questions about home schooling? A student at a Missouri university is asking questions about how public schools can better help home-schooled students who decide to go to public school.

\*You may answer questions only if you want. It should take you only about 30 minutes of your time to give your answers to the researcher.

\*The information you share may be used in a paper, but your name will not be used, so no one will know who gave the information.

\*Any information you share will be kept in a safe place.

\*If you start to answer questions and decide you want to stop answering questions, you can do so at any time.

\*If you would like to help answer questions about home-schooled students, please write your name below on the line for your name.

\*You will receive a copy of this permission form.

\*If you need to ask a question or need help in answering questions, you can ask your parent or the college student at any time.

If you have any questions or comments you are welcome to contact the student listed below or his University of Missouri advisor.

***Student:***

Jeff Koonce  
12411 Maries Road 607  
Dixon, MO 65459  
(573)855-0918

***University of Missouri-Columbia Advisor:***

Dr. Jay Scribner  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
Columbia, MO 65211  
(573)884-1708

Thank you for your help!

---

I would like to help answer questions about home schooling. I know that my name will not be used in public and that I can stop answering questions whenever I want. I also know that I can ask for help in answering the questions.

---

Signature

---

Date



## Appendix 2

Questionnaire used to survey initial convenience sampling of home schoolers in rural south central Missouri for the following research project: *The Transitional Experience of Home-Schooled Students Entering Public Education: How can Public Schools Better Serve the Home-Schooled Student's Transition to Public Education?*

### Home School Questionnaire

Topic: *The Transitional Experience of Home-Schooled Students Entering Public Education: How can Public Schools Better Serve the Home-Schooled Student's Transition to Public Education?*

Instructions: Please answer the following questions as openly as possible. Put check marks in the appropriate spots and use complete thoughts for your short answer questions.

#### Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Race (please check one): Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_ Afro-American \_\_\_\_\_

Hispanic/Latino \_\_\_\_\_ Native American \_\_\_\_\_ Asian \_\_\_\_\_

Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please identify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Family Structure (please check one): Two-parent family \_\_\_\_\_  
Single-parent family \_\_\_\_\_

4. Religious Affiliation (please check one): Non-religious \_\_\_\_\_  
Non-Christian \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please identify Religion—Muslim, Jewish, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Christian \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please identify denomination—Baptist, Catholic, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Annual Family Income (please check one): Less than \$30,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$30,000 to \$60,000 \_\_\_\_\_

\$60,000 to \$120,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
More than \$120,000 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Education Level of Parent (please check one): Diploma/GED \_\_\_\_\_  
Associate's Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Bachelor's Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (please list): \_\_\_\_\_

7. Does a home schooling parent have a teaching degree or state-issued teaching certificate (yes or no)? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Rate the top three (3) reasons your family decided to home school. Rank them in order with 1 being the top reason, 2 the number two reason, and 3 being the third most important reason.

- \_\_\_\_\_ My child can receive a better education at home
- \_\_\_\_\_ The public or private school was not meeting my child's educational needs
- \_\_\_\_\_ The schools did not teach my child the religious or moral values that I think are important in life
- \_\_\_\_\_ I did not feel the schools were a safe place for my child to learn
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child has special gifted abilities or special learning needs that were Not being addressed by the schools
- \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that God mandates that I teach my child in His ways
- \_\_\_\_\_ I was upset by how the schools handled my child
- \_\_\_\_\_ I found a curriculum that is better suited for my child than what the school can offer
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't want my child exposed to all the drugs, peer pressure, and worldliness found in public schools
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can provide more enrichment and life-long learning activities at home

9. What have you or did you enjoy about home schooling?

10. What was or has been frustrating about home schooling?

11. Why would you or did you transfer to a public or private school (check all that apply)?

- To participate in extra-curricular activities (band, sports, choir, drama, etc.)
- To access the learning resources that my local school can offer (library facilities, athletic facilities, computers, etc.) and not available at home
- To take upper level high school courses that could not be offered at home
- My child would not listen to me and cooperate with my home schooling efforts
- To learn to socialize with other students who had different beliefs and values
- Other (please identify): \_\_\_\_\_

12a. If you transferred to public school from home school, what were the biggest adjustments you had to make?

12b. If you think you might transfer to public school from home school, what are the biggest concerns you have about the transition?

## Appendix 3

### Individual Interview Questions

1. Why did you chose to home school or why were you home schooled?
2. What have been advantages of home schooling? What have you enjoyed about home schooling?
3. What factors have contributed to the success of the home school experience?
4. What was or has been the role of parental involvement in home schooling?  
How did it impact the quality of the home school education?
5. What factors have contributed to challenges or concerns with home schooling?
6. For what reasons did you consider in having a student leave the home school environment to attend a public school?
7. What concerns did you have regarding the transition from home school to public or private school?
8. How could your transitional concerns be addressed or how were they addressed?
9. How was or how do you think the role of parental involvement will be affected by the transition to the public school setting?
10. Was your transitional experience to public school positive or negative and what made it so?
11. How could the public school have better met your transitional needs?
12. How do you think public schools perceived you as you enrolled in public school?
13. What was your perception of public schools prior to your transition?
14. What is your perception of public schools after the transition?

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## VITA

Jeffrey B. Koonce was born in 1962 at Offuit Air Force Base in Nebraska while his dad was in the armed forces, but he grew up in the St. Louis, Missouri region where as a young boy he enjoyed baseball, football, reading, and playing the trumpet.

He attended Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri where he earned a B.A. degree in Mass Communication and received his teaching certificate in English and Journalism. He worked one year as editor of a small-town newspaper before entering the teaching profession.

While working as a high school English teacher in Owensville, Missouri, he received his Master of Education degree in School Guidance and Counseling from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. Afterwards, he worked ten years with the Ste. Genevieve, Missouri public school system as a middle school guidance counselor.

Koonce then completed his Educational Specialist degree in 2002 from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau and spent four years as a high school principal from 2002-2006. In 2003, he began work on his educational doctorate degree through the University of Missouri-Columbia. It was during the 2006-2007 school year that he took his first position as superintendent of schools with a small school district near Sedalia, Missouri.

In addition to his academic work and administration career, Koonce currently enjoys spending his time working on his farm, playing guitar, and watching old reruns of *The Andy Griffith Show*.