Homeschoolers: A Snapshot

Judy Wheaton
Director of Institutional Research and Assessment,
Austin College

Background

- in 2001, 10% of the Austin College freshman class had been homeschooled

- this high percentage of homeschoolers prompted the administration to evaluate our policies, marketing strategies, and most of all to assess how these students were faring in higher education
Curiosity about homeschoolers

• How can homeschoolers go to college without a high school diploma or GED?
• Why are parents homeschooling?
• Are they religious conservatives?
• Do homeschoolers socialize with other students or are they loners?
• What are their college majors?
• Are they keeping up academically?

Texas is one of the most home school-friendly states in the nation

• Home schools do not have to register with the school district, submit to home visits, or submit their curriculum for approval by a school district
• Homeschoolers no longer have to have a high school diploma, a GED, or an ability-to-benefit test in order to qualify for college financial aid
• According to the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), homeschooling is now a legal option for parents in all 50 states.
**LEGEND**

- **States requiring no notice**: No state requirement for parents to initiate any contact.
- **States with low regulation**: State requires parental notification only.
- **States with moderate regulation**: State requires parents to send notification, test scores, and/or professional evaluation of student progress.
- **State with high regulation**: State requires parents to send notification or achievement test scores and/or professional evaluation, plus other requirements (e.g., curriculum approval by the state, teacher qualification of parents, or home visits by state officials).

Home School Legal Defense Association (http://www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp)

---

**National Household Education Surveys**

US Dept of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimates 1.5 million students were homeschooled in 2007 (NHES’ Parent and Family Involvement Survey 2007)

**Number of Homeschoolers in the US (NCES 2009-030)**

- 1999: 850,000
- 2003: 1,100,000
- 2007: 1,500,000
Why do parents home school their children?

The National Household Education Surveys Program’s (NHES) Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI) 2007 data accounted that the top three reasons for parents to home school were:

1) to provide religious or moral instruction (36%)
2) concern about the school environment (21%)
3) dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools (17%).

Austin Demographics

The majority (78.7%) of the 157 Austin homeschoolers represented were homeschooled 4–9 years, with 10.2% having graduated from a home school.

![Gender Distribution Chart]

- Males: 46.5% Homschooled, 45.0% Traditional
- Females: 53.5% Homschooled, 55.0% Traditional
Race/Ethnicity

Homeschoolers

- Asian: 6.4%
- Black: 1.3%
- Foreign: 0.6%
- Hispanic: 7.6%
- White: 84.1%

Traditional Student

- Asian: 3.7%
- Black: 1.1%
- Foreign: 2.5%
- Hispanic: 7.8%
- White: 73.8%

Religions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Homeschoolers</th>
<th>Traditional Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Denominational</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Protestant</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First-time Full-time Freshman Homeschoolers

Most of the homeschoolers attending Austin College are from the state of Texas (93%), with small percentages from Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Michigan, Oklahoma, Oregon, Costa Rica.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home School First-time Full-time Freshman Cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001 Cohort #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also 16 Transfer students scattered across years

Upon entering Austin College, many students declared their most probable field of study to be Arts and Humanities (24.1%), with the Social Sciences (17.2%) and professional fields (15.5%) coming next. When asked about their probable occupation, most responded that they were undecided, although 22% responded “physician”.

Actual Majors of Home School Graduates:

- 7.6% Sciences
- 3.3% Interdisciplinary Studies
- 45.7% Social Sciences
- 43.5% Humanities
SAT Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT Critical Reading</th>
<th>SAT Math</th>
<th>SAT Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin Homeschoolers</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin Traditional Students</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homeschoolers and Campus Involvement
157 homeschoolers were associated with 1,359 co-curricular groups and activities from varsity sports to music, theater, student government, humanitarian organizations, fraternities and sororities, leadership, ethnic organizations, religious ministries, the Homecoming court, honor societies, residence hall councils/assistants, departmental organizations, peer educators, political organizations, and the dean’s list

Six-Year College Graduation Rates
Homeschoolers: 76.67%
Overall Austin College: 76.28%
National: 54.20%
CIRP Freshman Survey

• When homeschooled students were asked how many miles the college is from their hometown, nearly half (43.2%) answered from 101-500 miles, while 10% less of the traditional students (33.9%) answered the same for that question.

• For many (66.2%) of the homeschooled students, Austin College was their first choice (59.7% for traditional students), and nearly a third had applied to no other, or only one other college for admission (17.9% for traditional students).

• The percent of students coming from homes with both parents alive and living with each other was nearly the same for the homeschooled students (73.2%) and the traditional Austin students (72.9%).

CIRP Freshman Survey (pre-college) attitudes and activities responses

Students responding “occasionally” or “frequently”

• Nearly 10% more of the homeschoolers attended religious services compared to the traditional Austin students (90.0% vs 80.4%)

• For the homeschoolers, drinking beer had a slightly lower response rate when compared to the traditionally-schooled Austin students (29.6% vs 32.8%), but drinking wine or liquor was slightly higher for the homeschoolers (41.6% vs 39.2)

• Nearly five percent less of the entering homeschoolers reported having performed volunteer work when compared to their traditional Austin peers (82.9% vs 87.8%)

• Responses showed that 7% more of the homeschoolers played a musical instrument when compared to the traditional Austin students (56.0% vs 49.0%)
CIRP Freshman Survey (pre-college) attitudes and activities responses

Students responding “frequently” only

- Homeschoolers responded less often than the traditional Austin group to “frequently”: being bored in class (35.4% vs 43.1%), feeling overwhelmed (17.2% vs 33.7%), feeling depressed (7.1% vs 7.7%), discussing politics (29.9% vs 39.8%), and using the internet for homework (72.4% vs 74.7%)

- Homeschoolers came to Austin College having less experience socializing with someone from another racial/ethnic group than the traditional Austin students. Nearly 16% less homeschoolers than traditionally-schooled students responded to socializing “frequently” with someone from another racial/ethnic group (66.2% vs 81.8%)

- Four percent more homeschoolers discussed religion “frequently” than their traditional Austin peers (39.4% vs 35.0%)

- A slight difference was seen between the homeschoolers and traditional students in smoking cigarettes “frequently” (4.0% vs 3.7%)

Are homeschoolers conservative?

I agree somewhat or strongly:

- abortion should be legal
- the death penalty should be abolished
- marijuana should be legalized
- the federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns
- racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America
- wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now
- colleges should prohibit extreme speakers on campus
- same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status
- affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished

Homeschoolers answered more conservatively regarding their values and beliefs than their traditional peers with the exception of the marijuana, which was answered more liberally than their traditionally-schooled peers.

It is important to note here that the conservative difference was slight on the death penalty, handguns, racial discrimination, and affirmative action, each reflected less than a 10% difference. Their strongest conservative beliefs were regarding abortion, taxes for the wealthy, extreme speakers on campus, and legalizing same sex marriages
How would you characterize your political views?

- Liberal/far left: 32.4% Homeschooled Students, 33.5% Traditional Students
- Middle of the road: 36.1% Homeschooled Students, 44.6% Traditional Students
- Conservative/far right: 31.5% Homeschooled Students, 21.9% Traditional Students

Parents’ Education

- Austin Traditional Parents
- Austin Home School Parents

Nationally a significant increase is seen in parents with college degrees homeschooling their children. We see the same swell in undergraduate degrees for homeschoolers’ parents, but as also reflected in national (private school) data, homeschoolers’ parents are behind the traditional students’ parents in graduate/professional school degrees.
How are homeschoolers doing from their freshman to senior year?

NSSE Value-added experiences for homeschoolers

• asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions

• worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources

• put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions

• used e-mail to communicate with an instructor

NSSE Value-added experiences for homeschoolers

• discussed grades or assignments with an instructor and worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework

• had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than my own, and

• had serious conversations with students who are very different from me in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values
NSSE high-order questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Order Deep Learning Activities</th>
<th>Austin College Homeschoolers</th>
<th>Austin College Traditional Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the current school year, how much has your course-work emphasized the following mental activities quite a bit or very much:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth.</td>
<td>89% 67% 87% 88%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.</td>
<td>72% 67% 79% 88%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data.</td>
<td>83% 67% 72% 82%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.</td>
<td>71% 67% 78% 86%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are homeschoolers unprepared for deep learning courses like Math and Science?

On average, each traditional Austin student completed 1.9 Math courses and 3.2 Science courses vs. homeschoolers 0.8 Math and 1.9 Science courses. The table below reflects their average GPA in Math and Science courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeschoolers Average Scores</th>
<th>Traditional Austin Students Average Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math GPA – 2.58</td>
<td>Science GPA – 2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math GPA – 2.72</td>
<td>Science GPA – 2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transcript analysis

| Homeschoolers taking introductory level Science and Math courses | 90.4% |
| Homeschoolers taking upper-level Science or Math courses | 9.6% |

16.2% of the Math and Science courses taken by the homeschoolers were either taken for a pass/fail grade (not calculated in their cumulative college GPA), or taken, but then dropped with a passing grade (also not calculated in their cumulative GPA)

Focus Groups

One mother in the home school parent focus groups was not surprised by these data, she commented that good home school Math and Science curriculums are more difficult to come by, as most of the home school materials are geared more towards the humanities.

Another mother commented that many of the home school mothers don’t feel comfortable teaching college prep Science and Math courses.
Conclusions

Austin College Homeschoolers:

• adjusted well in the areas of peer socialization and activity involvement

• submitted higher SAT Critical Reading scores than peers, possibly influencing their selection of college majors: 45.7% Social Sciences, 43.5% Humanities, 7.6% Math and Sciences, 3.3% Interdisciplinary Studies

• responded with confidence re: their artistic abilities, creativity, understanding of others, and writing abilities

• spent more time preparing for classes, were more likely to complete assignments, and showed an elevated drive to achieve over their traditionally-schooled peers

Austin College homeschoolers:

• reflected slight upward differences in graduation rates

• had slightly higher average cumulative undergraduate GPA than traditional peers

• showed some differences from their traditionally-schooled peers in religious affiliations and in their political views; reflected very minor differences in activities such as drinking alcoholic beverages and smoking cigarettes - suggesting that this was not an overall conservative group of homeschoolers

• showed a probable lack of preparedness for the Math and Sciences in higher education than the traditionally-schooled students

• took less Math and Science courses than their traditionally-schooled peers
Institutions of higher education should continue to explore the theories, assumptions, realities, and impacts of the home school experience.

**Austin College** has clearly benefited from being open-minded and accessible to these students.