

When one considers what COVID-19 [put families with school-aged children through since 2020](#)—learning through a screen, zero sports or other extracurriculars, lost school supports such as free lunches, social isolation, masking, increases in anxiety and other mental health disorders and beyond—perhaps it's not surprising that **parents no longer want to jump through schools' (public and private) COVID-19 hoops.**

Plus, homeschooling has been on a general [upward trajectory](#) anyway; in California and across the nation, homeschooling has **increased roughly 90%** over the last decade.

What has struck those in education, is the awareness of the **broad range of families who are homeschooling now.** Hint: it's more than Sunday School-attending, backwoods White folks.

These days on the homeschool front are [Black families](#) who have concerns about racism in public schools, [atheists](#), former public school teachers (Golding amongst them), families living with [disabilities](#), and those concerned about ["progressive" curriculum](#) moving at the speed of light, beyond their comfort zone.

Steven Duvall, Ph.D., is the Director of Research at the California-based Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). He has heard from plenty of families who list a plethora of reasons for ditching public schools since 2020.

What had really surprised him is the way that many, if not most, new homeschooling families are still going strong in 2023, long after the launch of COVID-19. Steven had this to say during our conversation on **January 9, 2023:**

"I expected a lot more students to return to public schools a lot faster than they have. I think that only because of the pandemic that some of these things, what was really going on in the classrooms, began to be broadcast. Before all that happened, I would have expected things to return to normal faster, but we have a homeschool movement now that's considerably bigger."

Like Duvall, Lutz Braum, the VP of Product Marketing and Innovation at Stride, an education company, points to the vastly different landscape of today's learn-at-home environment. "It's a newly-discovered reason to not only start, but keep, homeschooling, he said." During our one-on-one conversation on **January 9, 2023**, he added:

"It's really the flexibility offered by these programs that parents like most. Things like a customized education plan, having parents and students play a larger role in what's being taught and even the political climate, which has started to influence the outlook on educational options in many states.

In short, families have access to more educational information than ever before, and they are finding they can customize their student's education to fit their needs and interests."

Co-oppin'

So what are all these new homeschooling students doing—sitting around a kitchen table, hands folded in mute silence, while the mother, clad in a denim jumper, supervises worksheets and book-readings?

Definitely not, said Braum. "Students can spend time on the computer, go outside on field trips, and take care of family or other needs." Homeschool co-ops, meanwhile, where local groups of homeschool students meet in-person afford the following, he added:

"They allow for socializing networks...students [can] learn to work with others and learn from others while still following individual curriculums and additional opportunities for socializing and resource-sharing."

Grace Schroeder, an Oregonian **mom of four**, utilizes her **local homeschool co-op** for her two school-aged children. Every Wednesday, the family heads to the co-op meeting space, where, as a group, students spend three hours learning together.

Topics include art, science, history, math, Latin, and geography, as well as the opportunity to give presentations (a higher-level show and tell).

“The community that we have and the support from other homeschooling families has been such a blessing,” Schroeder expressed, and went on to say during our conversation on **January 13, 2023**:

“Having the freedom to all load up and go to work with the kids’ dad for the day and do spelling on the way, and working on math while we’re at the job site, are such an amazing experience, that I have no doubt that what we are doing is right for our family and children at this time.”

It was a choice that Schroeder, the **sister of a longtime public school teacher**, didn’t see coming. She and her husband had initially enrolled their oldest son, Noah, in a private school.

At first, it was fantastic, even when COVID-19 hit and his teacher started wearing a face shield. But when the state of Oregon began “coming down harder” on all schools to implement strict masking, Noah, who had speech issues, could no longer communicate like before.

“It took us a matter of five minutes to decide that we were going to switch to homeschooling,” Schroeder exclaimed.

What’s more, Schroeder and her new community are reflective of a larger trend: **parents banding together to use their personal and professional strengths** to ensure their children and friends are receiving a well-rounded education. Golding, for example, often relies on teaching strategies she learned as a public school educator.

Of course non-educators can join the fun too. In fact, you don’t need to have a college degree to be an effective homeschool parent; [research shows no correlation between the parents’ education level and how well their homeschooled child performed on academic testing](#) (the exact opposite of public school families).

“We have a group of families starting a new co-op based specifically on parents’ strengths, so that different families without those strengths can utilize their community of families in the teaching of their children,” Schroeder echoed. She continued:

“It’s a relief, because I don’t have to have all of the teaching expectations fall on my shoulders, especially the [subjects] that I may personally struggle with. **It’s exciting to see so many parents become so personally invested in their children’s education.**”



Not Your Grandma’s Homeschool

Besides co-ops, other ways to utilize parental strengths have sprung up in modern homeschooling.

“**Learning pods**” are basically [handpicked miniature schools](#), where small groups of children, often the same grades or ages, come together on a regular basis to **mimic a school environment**.

Parents rotate the teaching duties, educating on a topic they know well (business, Spanish, home economics, science, etc.).

“[Private Education Associations](#) (PEAs),” meanwhile, utilize a **one-room schoolhouse approach**. These are in-person, [members-only](#), “homeschool-lite” options for multiple grades and levels. Parents can both teach and pitch in to hire educators, all while remaining fully in charge of curriculum, rules, and policies.

Yet another option is “[unschooling](#),” a nontraditional (even by most homeschool standards) [educational philosophy](#) that follows no set curriculum and is instead guided solely by the child(ren)’s innate curiosity.

With unschooling, children can study birds in the forest outside their home for days, get lost in painting, or build elaborate Lego sets to their little hearts’ desires. You might call this “learning in the land of wonder.”

This model lends itself well to an “**apprenticeship**” style of learning, with parents able to bring their child(ren) alongside someone knowledgeable (including themselves) in whatever subject the youngsters are currently enjoying.

Like everything else, technology has drastically changed the way today’s homeschoolers gain knowledge. Students can now learn complicated subjects vastly outside their parents’ skillsets via the web.

Online tutoring, virtual charter schools, how-to videos, parent-moderated chat rooms and clubs—there is no subject too obscure for the internet, allowing your child to authentically dig into their unique passions.

Kari Stiner discovered the benefits of combining **virtual resources** with learning from home when her son, Jonah, began homeschooling in the fourth grade, at the onset of pandemic policies.

Now in middle school, he takes math online, while **Stiner networks virtually with other like-minded homeschool moms** for ideas and friendship. Kari shared during our chat on **January 16, 2023**:

“While I may not be the best at any one subject, this day and age, with the internet you can learn anything, and my hunger to learn has fed and sparked the joy of learning for my son. I had no idea just how rewarding it would be to see my son grasp a concept.”

Jonah is enrolled in a **homeschool-friendly charter school**, which allows Stiner to choose the curriculum, and still retain teacher support from home. He also gets one day a week of **get-together learning**. The result?

Not only has Jonah had plenty of time for real-life skills, Stiner explains:

“We have friends with many different talents such as welding, construction and heavy equipment operating, so he has been able to learn a lot from them.”

Stiner noticed that Jonah’s left-behind friends had become jealous of his opportunities:

“His friends who stayed in public school often ask questions about what he learns and what he does all day. After he fills them in, he is often met with responses like, ‘**Wow we don’t learn any of that,**’ or ‘We don’t learn anything.’”

Stiner’s experience isn’t merely anecdotal. Research shows that across the board, **homeschoolers largely outperform their public school counterparts**—and [it’s not even close](#).

California homeschoolers, for example, test 28 to 38 percentile points higher in reading, language, math, science, and social studies than public schoolers from around the nation.

Homeschoolers go on to volunteer and vote in greater quantities, graduate from college at identical or higher rates, and demonstrate more political tolerance as adults than those who were not homeschooled. Heck, they even [save](#) taxpayers billions.

The homeschooled kids are, by and large, clearly alright.

“I never ever dreamed it, and simultaneously have been in awe of **how wonderful a fit [homeschooling] is for our family,**” says Golding. “It has been such a gift that we are on this journey.”

It’s a gift that comes in every shape, size, and color, waiting to be unwrapped by untold numbers of families with their own strengths and stories.



Are You Ready to Jump In?

You are ultimately in charge of your child’s education, so if homeschooling sounds like it might be a good fit, go for it! Resources for modern homeschoolers abound, so don’t be afraid to get your feet wet.

It’s okay, and even smart, to **try several new styles or methods** entirely, or even revert to an old one. It boils down to what works best for you and your child, at the current stage of your lives.

The first step, and a critical one, is to look up your [state’s homeschool-related laws](#), as they will vary. Some states have nearly zero requirements; some only require you to notify your child(ren)’s current school district that you are **disenrolling them in favor of homeschool** (considered low regulation), or that you plan to homeschool your new kindergartener.

Other states’ laws, meanwhile, are much more intensive, requiring submitted lesson plans, mandated subjects, or annual academic testing.

Some states offer multiple homeschooling “options,” such as homeschooling with a private tutor, or homeschooling with school board approval—even the option to register your homeschool as a religious private school.

Thankfully, California is listed by HSLDA as a “low regulation” homeschool state.

After understanding that you **cannot just yank your kids from private or public school** and be done—there is proper legal procedure to follow—you will want to address the following:

- **Peruse** the various [homeschool options](#) at Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)
- **Consider** what sort of [homeschool curriculum](#) might work best for your family
- **If** you’re a [military family](#), you and your kids are eligible to receive 100% free online tutoring in over 150 subjects
- **Discover** your [homeschool style](#) via online quizzes
- **Find** your [state’s homeschooling association](#), such as the [California Homeschool Network](#), for conferences, resources, networking, legal help and more
- **Utilize** your local library system, not only for books and other media, also for classes, clubs, internet access, tutoring, concerts, and more

- **Explore** your local homeschooling scene: There are learning pods, co-ops, PEAs, support groups, book clubs, and even sports leagues!

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