

## Alternative Schooling

### *The Assault on Parenthood* by Dana Mack (1997)

Dana begins with a striking statistics: in the last two decades (prior to 1997), the number of home schooling families has grown exponentially.

Why home school; or why so many electing to withdraw from conventional programs and proceed in home schooling? She replies:

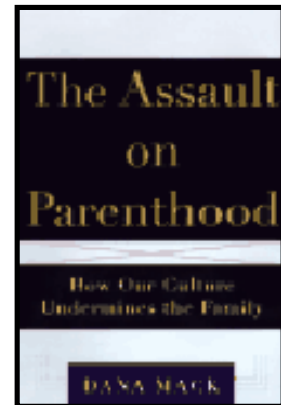
A growing number of parents perceive that school is a “a terrible waste” of childhood and family time, and that schools are “less about learning than control.”

She continues on the response adding some deeper meaning to the matter: “Indeed, it (trends in home schooling) reflects a breakdown of public consensus on the deepest questions of moral and civic life: **how to raise decent and productive citizens.**”

Ms. Mack has much more to add to the dynamic of the home schooling family; that more positive causes are expressed for keeping the children at home than the negative for sending to conventional programs.

Still, the criticism of the school systems do surface and, as one home schooling parent expresses:

The public school curriculum can never compete with home schooling because it is by the very nature of institutionalization a compromise – “a hodge-podge of materials and assumptions resulting from the historical interplay of educational theories, as well as organizational...and political expedience.



In a survey that revealed the frustrations of home schooling parents, the sentiment that has given rise to the growth of this community of educators is described in more detail:

Most home-schooling parents see the home school as a means of protecting their young from the rivalry, ridicule, and competition and conflicting moral values they believe are associated with much of the socialization that takes place in schools... This attitude does not preclude [their] children from associating with other children; most parents encourage social encounters... [but] they want their children to be family socialized... [to have] their family be the center of the children’s social world.

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Home schooling has seen better than average performance on scholastic tests – which leads to the question of how the uncertified educators (the parents) seem to do so well. One development psychologist describes their success as an added degree of care and interest over the gaps that may exist in the academics.

A long-time proponent and public figure of the community, John Holt, described home education as being as private (rather than public) as a person's politics or religion. He referred to home schooling as "un-schooling" because it was "radically individual" – a "revolt, in itself, against the trend toward conformity in modern institutional life".

In her continued description of the history of home schooling, court cases are described with the backdrop of all systems bent on control beyond parental involvement and influence in their children's education. In some cases, the Constitution served as the source for parental decision of home schooling and the consequences of truancy and criminal charges. In some exceptions, parents had their children taken from them and placed in foster homes.

Much continues in the alternative schooling – ranging from independent and secular school systems to denominational or religious schools. The later of the two quasi-conventional systems has also experienced growth during the last two decades.

More schools (or types) include the parochial or Catholic schools that, though traditionally being very good, have seen diminishing numbers of enrollment through the years.

Finally, the schools designed to take the toughest kids such as The Wildcat Academy in New York. This program is renowned for re-invigorating parental involvement and giving the kids the individual attention and discipline in a combination of work and education.

As with each chapter, the summary has left out much material offered by Dana. What has been offered in condensed form is largely to describe the home schooling movement spurred by growing cultural and moral differences in our society. When parents want to be involved with their children – both as a guide and a guardian, they should be! Denied of that right and privilege, the children suffer through wrongful use of power and authority. Parents are key to their kids' development; consequently, they should be encouraged to support their children as parents...and not just as financiers or something less.