

# HOMESCHOOL VS PUBLIC SCHOOL VS PRIVATE SCHOOL: WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO?

<http://oakcityacademy.org/2015/09/29/homeschool-vs-public-school-vs-private-school-whats-a-parent-to-do/>

I will be the first to say that there are Pro's and Con's to each of these schooling systems. My children have been involved in all three. But I would also be the first to say, pray about it and see your responsibility as the parent to choose the best situation for your child. There are certainly some very good teachers out there and they genuinely love their jobs and the kids they teach. There are also some very good public schools that are trying hard to hold on to Christian foundations but are finding themselves being forced to comply. No one knows your child better than you! No one will want the best for your child like you will as a Christian parent. So realize you are the parent! You have the final say so! I hope you enjoy this article!

~Vickie McCarty Ph.D

Here is the age old debate which seems really hot during these days with the rise of the home school movement and the growing inadequacy of the public school system. As little Johnny or Jamaal hits about 3 or 4 years old, parents start to wonder what they will do for education. Some parents just assume public school is the only option because it is the biggest and society has drilled it into their heads that the school house is the only proper place for education. Some Christian parents hold up the banner of being missional, so they send little Samuel to be the school evangelist. Other parents refuse to socially conform in order to choose a path where they are the primary influencers of their beloved's education, assuming they themselves can provide a comparable or a far superior education than the public system. These parents like the ability to tailor the curriculum to their beliefs as well as the redirection of educational influence away from the state back to the family. Finally, others know a state education is not what they desire but they feel inadequate to teach their children themselves. This feeling may be because of time, lack of resources, or some other extenuating circumstance.

They turn to the private schools, seeing they at least have a choice and can choose something similar to how they might do it.

In view of all these options, how is a parent to choose? How might we think logically and objectively through these options? We would all agree there must be some standard, there must be some criteria by which these options can be measured. Since we live in God's world and education is really about all that God has made, it seems logical and most desirable to use the Lord's standards for a parent's education of their children. Below are five biblical requirements for a child's education. The Scriptures that these requirements stem from have been listed for further study. These requirements form the criteria by which the various options of public, private, and homeschool should be considered.

## THE BIBLICAL STANDARD FOR THE CHILD'S EDUCATION

- The education of one's children is the parent's responsibility and ultimately the father's responsibility. ([Gen. 18:19](#), [Deut. 6:6-7](#), [Josh. 4:19-24](#), [Ps. 78:5-7](#), [Eph. 6:4](#))
- The Scriptures primarily speak of parents educating their children in the commands, ways, and works of the Lord. ([Deut. 6:6-7](#); [11:18-19](#))
- The manner of this education is to be multi-generational and is exemplified through one-on-one, life-on-life relationships ([Ps. 78:5-7](#))
- Parents are responsible for the education of their children in the things of creation, but the Scriptures do not require that the fullness of that education flow from the parent alone. ([Gen. 1:28](#))
- Fathers are responsible to protect their children regarding the various influences that they are subjected to. ([Gen. 2:15](#))

In summary, education is the parent's responsibility, it is to be multi-generational, the content should be in the ways of the Lord and the world He has made, and parents should be informed enough about the education that they can offer adequate protection where needed. Some key words that summarize these criteria are: responsibility, multi-generational, commands, creation, and informed to protect. Now let's dive into evaluating

each of these options so that parents can make an informed decision about their child's education.

## HOME SCHOOL

Home school generally pertains to the parents taking the primary role of instruction in their child's life. They oversee and administer almost all aspects of their child's education. In some instances the child may be instructed by other adults, but generally these occasions are far less than the amount of instruction the child receives from the parent.

## PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- In the homeschool environment the parent is displaying full responsibility for their child's instruction as they establish themselves as the primary educators of their children. A homeschool is the greatest display of parental responsibility that exists amongst all the options.

## MULTI-GENERATIONAL

- Unless there is extended family in the home, traditionally this could be a weaker aspect of the homeschool environment. Typically the child only has one instructor which is the mother of the family. Some homeschool families seek educational experiences with other families and to that extent the possibilities for multi-generational instruction increase. As children travel around with their parents to various meetings and errands, they do come into contact with different age ranges of people. Yet these interactions are typically not intentionally educational, except in the case of the intentional parent who purposes them as such.

# TEACHING THE LORD'S COMMANDS

- The homeschool family has the greatest opportunity and freedom of instruction in the Lord's commands, but often this becomes a question of resources and desire. The homeschool family may have great intentions of teaching the Lord's commands, but often they are limited to their own resources or the resources of their homeschool community. If the family or community flourishes with biblical instruction and resources, the commands and ways of the Lord will flow easily into the children. Yet where the family or community is ignorant then so will their children be.

# TEACHING ABOUT THE LORD'S CREATION

- Unless the homeschool parent is a trained or experienced educator they will rely heavily on an external curriculum and the educational experience they had growing up. The depth of understanding about creation will depend on the depth of the curriculum, the homeschool community to which the family belongs, and the ability of the parent to sharpen it into their child. The children will excel here to the degree the parent invests their time in learning the material and they learn from others. Yet for those who are occupied with other children, part time work, family responsibilities, or they employ a lessor curriculum, their children's education will suffer on all aspects of creation.

# INFORMED TO PROTECT

- Informed protection is the other noticeable strength of the homeschool model of education. As the parents are the primary educators, they are fully informed of their child's instructional content and process. They are able to fully protect their children from any perspectives contrary to their own beliefs.

# PRIVATE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Though a parent sends their children to a private school they do not nor cannot send their responsibility to the private school as well. Responsibility for education always resides with the parent and thus the parent is fully responsible for every aspect of instruction their children receive. This level of responsibility should serve as a caution for parents when they consider sending their children to be educated by someone else or by an institution in general. In order to wield their responsibility well, the parent should be informed as much as possible about what the child is learning, which should be beyond asking the child themselves. In evaluating the private school option, the parent should consider how well the school works to inform the parent regarding the child's education. Yet it is also up to the parent to actively communicate with the school and teachers in order to stay informed as well.

## MULTI-GENERATIONAL

- In a setting where there are multiple teachers throughout the course of a child's education, there is a greater opportunity for the child to learn

from different adults and from different generations. As a parent considers a private school, they should also consider the teaching staff. Is there diversity of age and gender in the teaching staff so that the child may glean from generational wisdom?

## TEACHING THE LORD'S COMMANDS

- Typically private Christian schools strive to do well in teaching the Lord's commands and ways. Yet what it means to be "Christian" and to teach the Lord's commands may vary greatly. Instead of leaving this teaching up to the parent's most optimistic interpretation, they should ask detailed questions. They should ask how the school is distinctly Christian and how they teach the Lord's commands on a regular basis. The inquisitive parent will find some schools who think Christian teachers and a Bible class is all it takes to be Christian. They may find other schools that take it farther by integrating the Bible into daily lessons, cultivating a Christian world view, integrating Christ into every subject, and approaching education from a discipleship model. Teaching the Lord's commands can be a strength of the private school option depending on how seriously the school takes it.

## TEACHING ABOUT THE LORD'S CREATION

- A private Christian school will generally have more access to educational resources, more access to experienced educators, and purposefulness about the curriculum they choose. This becomes a strength for the private school for those who focus on cultivating these assets. Often they will start with a certain curriculum and then use a curriculum instructor whose sole job is to enhance the curriculum and ensure its consistent use amongst all the teachers of the school. The

purposeful oversight over the curriculum is another strength of the private school over other options.

## INFORMED TO PROTECT

- Communication between the school and the parent will vary dependent upon the organization of the private school and the systems they have in place. Typically parents don't express much interest in the details of their child's education, which cultivates a hands-off approach to communication for private schools in general. Yet seeing that the level of information directly impacts how a parent protects their child, the parent will want to ask questions about what the flow of communication looks like between the private school and the parent. They will want to ask about the specific structures that are in place to facilitate this flow of information and communication.

## PUBLIC SCHOOL

### PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Again the parent is no less responsible for sending a child to a public school over educating the child themselves. Parental responsibility directly ties to information and oversight of their child's education. The parent should be clear that they are handing their child over to be educated by the government, who has their own agenda and beliefs about education. They are handing their child over to a system that resists parental oversight and was initially structured to take responsibility away from the parent. Thus the public school system actually works against parental responsibility in various degrees dependent upon school system.

## MULTI-GENERATIONAL

- Seeing that the public school system has been in operation for so long, they have a wide range of teacher diversity, especially generationally. This access to experienced educators is a strength for the public school. They can offer teachers who just finished college and teachers who have been educating for 30 years.

## TEACHING THE LORD'S COMMANDS

- The government has misinterpreted separation between church and state to mean that no singular religion should be promoted over any other religion. The result is that some systems resist any kind of religious exposure and others seek to be all inclusive, exposing the child to every kind of religion. There does seem to be a distinct resistance to anything Christian, though Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and others are more tolerated if not marginally embraced. The result is either no exposure to religion or exposure to many religions, both of which exclude teaching in the Lord's commands. Now there may be Christian teachers in the system who do teach from Christian principles and even weave in a Christian world view here and there. Yet this is inconsistent at best and the parent has little choice in choosing such a teacher.

## TEACHING ABOUT THE LORD'S CREATION

- The public school system is very experienced in teaching about God's creation. There are vast resources available to expose a child to the

intricacies of all that God has made. They offer a very diverse educational curriculum that can touch on just about anything a parent could desire. This would be a strength for the school except for a central drawback. The school does not connect all that the Lord has made to Himself, rather it is attributed to evolution and mother nature. All of God's works of creation are intellectually corrupted in this way and actually used as a weapon against God. The child will be taught that the very things that are supposed to reflect the Lord are actually evidence that the Lord does not exist! The blessed reflection becomes a diabolical enemy in the hands of the public school!

## INFORMED TO PROTECT

- In theory and marginal practice the school welcomes parental involvement and understanding. Yet their interpretation of this relates to the student's grades and anything the school wants the parent to do to enhance the school's education of the child. Yet when it comes to what the child is actually taught, there is a strong resistance to information and change. There are few structures to inform the parent on what is actually taught on a daily basis, except through the elementary backpack folders which are not a complete picture of the instruction. Any attempt for the parent to change the instructional material is often met with personal offense and a closure of access to future conversations of that nature.

Now that we have seen the criteria and applied them towards each of the main educational options, how do parents move forward? The requirements are plain, but in general none of the options perfectly fulfill the requirements. Each one has its strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps a hybrid of two options will actually be nearer to the mark. The parent is clearly responsible for their child's education and this cannot be transferred to any other entity. Therefore they should evaluate the Scriptures to see which of the criteria they believe is a command and which is more wisdom. That determination will clear the way for which criteria they will value most and which they can be more lenient on. Then they should evaluate their own resources, what sacrifices they can

make, and what educational options they actually have access to. Now they can make an informed and biblically responsible decision as to the education of their children. Yet this is not a one-time decision, for as life circumstances change they may need to change their educational strategy. The education of their children should be ever on their minds and evaluated periodically to see if it can be improved.

Now there are some options arising at least in the Raleigh, NC area for homeschool and private schools. A parent may want to homeschool their children, but feel like they did not receive an adequate education to do it. There are organizations that have created learning co-ops by which parents can meet together once a week, learn together, and then carry that instruction through the remainder of the week. Classical Conversations is one such organization. They follow the classical model of instruction and provide a great parental support system. In the younger years, parents will bring their children to a class where the child is educated in a classical model. The parents observe this instruction and then reinforce it themselves the other days of the week. This model allows the parent to learn how to instruct and to receive a great curriculum by which to instruct their children.

There are some private schools emerging on the scene, as well, which greatly support the criteria. The weakness of private schools is parental involvement, which means that parents should be looking for a school that desires them to be highly involved. The school should clearly communicate their vision, how they teach, and the curriculum they use. They should set up a structure for clear and timely access to the progress of the children they teach. They might also welcome parents assisting in the classes their children are in as long as they are a help and not a distraction. Now it would be too far to say that the school would change the curriculum it uses based on a parents desire. Rather the parent should review the curriculum used at the school and decide if they can support it or not. Once the parent has had an opportunity to review all that the school has to offer, they should whole heartedly support it if they are sending their children there. Support does not mean silence, but rather suggesting ideas that are helpful and then not getting offended if the advice is not headed.