Homeschooling using Online Resources:

A Literature Review

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**Introduction**

One of the most important roles as a parent is making sure that your children get the best education possible. This is becoming a difficult task due to all the problems plaguing schools today. The option that many parents are choosing is Home Schooling. While many parents have the desire to home school their children, many lack the tools necessary to effectively operate a home school. This is where online educational resources can become very important.

 This literature review will investigate several aspects of homeschooling and how online resources can facilitate successful home schooling. Initially, I would like to explore the reasons that parents choose home schooling to educate their children. Then, I will analyze the homeschool requirements in North Carolina. Next I will examine the online options for public, private and charter school that are available for use in home schooling and the costs associated with these options. Finally, I will delve into the success of homeschooling.

**Reasons for Home Schooling**

 Parents want to give their children the best education possible. Many public school systems are filled with violence, bullying and substance abuse. Often private schools are too expensive to be an option for most families. There is also a limited availability of private schools available in many areas or the schools available don’t meet the student’s needs (Driscoll & Wagner, 2014).

 Many other families have turned to home schooling because of President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act. This act emphasizes testing and rote learning versus hands on learning. Families feel that the public school system offers one type of teaching without taking needs of children into account. Children have intellectual, developmental, moral and emotional needs that cannot be met with this cookie cutter approach (Driscoll & Wagner, 2014).

 Bullying caused Janet Delgado to seek out another schooling option for her son. She had home schooled him before but had placed him into public school so he could learn from teachers that specialize in their subject areas. Along with bullying, he was not being challenged academically. Since she returned to home schooling had hasn’t had to worry about other things and has been able to concentrate on his education (Moriak, 2011).

**Homeschool Regulations**

 “North Carolina law defines homeschool as a non-public school consisting of the children of not more than two families or households, where the parents or legal guardians or members of either household determine the scope and sequence of the academic instruction, provide academic instruction, and determine additional sources of academic instruction”. (NC Division of Non-Public Education, 2013, p.01).

This definition has been amended to allow parents to seek additional resources such as tutors, group settings, and teachers who are experts in their field. This change gives parents more freedom in planning their children’s education (NC Division of Non-Public Education, 2013). This changed allowed parents to enroll their children in NCVPS core courses and other available courses (North Carolina Virtual Public School, 2014). Parents who home school their children make sacrifices to do so and should be given some freedom in choosing educational resources. Unnecessary regulation will interfere with homeschooling families (Clouthier, 2014).

A parent wishing to operate a home school must complete a few requirements in order to home school children between the ages of 7 and 16. This requirements are as follows:

* Parents or legal guardians must have a high school diploma or equivalent.
* Send the Division of Non-Public Education an intent to operate a home school.
* Elect to operate as a religions or non-religious school.
* Operate the school on a regular schedule during at least nine calendar months.
* Have a nationally standardized achievement test administered annually to each student.
* Notify DPNE when the school is no longer in operation.

(NC Division of Non-Public Education, 2013)

**Online Home School Options**

**Public Schools Online**

 Some states offer virtual public schools. This allows students to take classes online with support from teachers by phone, online, and occasionally face to face. These public school options provide some perks that are not available in private school options.

Students in public schools often receive the following:

* Tuition-free education
* State-certified teachers with parent/legal guardian as learning coach
* Learning anywhere they can access the internet
* Flexible scheduling
* Combination of online and offline coursework
* Membership in a community of connected learners with extracurricular activities
* Loaner computer and subsidized internet access (if needed). (K-12 Online Public School, 2014)

One of the most important factors to consider when choosing a public online school is accreditation. The school you choose must be properly accredited and offer diplomas. In the event your child ends up transferring to a public school, this will make application of credits less confusing (Littlefield, 2014). The North Carolina Virtual Public School started a program for non-public school students in 2012. In 2012 they enrolled 4 students and during the 2012-2013 school year, they had 11 non-public school students enrolled in 13 classes. These students have seen success with this program. (North Carolina Virtual Public School, 2014)

**Charter Schools Online**

 Online charter schools offer high school diploma programs at no cost to the student. Charter schools receive less government funding so they have less government oversight. Most online charter school have regional accreditation unless they are a new school and have not completed the accreditation process. There are pros and cons to online charter schools. (Littlefield, 2014)

The obvious pro to charter schools is the elimination of tuition. Often these schools also provide books and learning materials at no cost. These schools also target specific students or focus on specific subjects. (Littlefield, 2014) This definitely removes the cookie cutter approach seen in many other schools. The con to charter school in stability. They tend to be less stable than online private schools and online public schools. Since they are often run by private companies, inexperience, mismanagement, and corruption can occur. Lawmakers in some states are not comfortable with the semi-independent online programs and seek to shut them down (Littlefield, 2014).

**Online Private Schools**

 There are many online private schools available. Online private schools offer the most individualized education that often comes with a handsome price tag. K-12 Online Learning offers three distinctive private school options. They are all fully accredited, tuition-based, and offer flexible learning schedules. Through these schools you may complete full-time enrollment for a diploma or just register for individual courses. All of these schools provide a plethora of industry leading curriculum, teacher support, and academic counselors and coaches. (K-12 Online Private Schools, 2014)

 K-12 offers three different private school options. The K-12 International Academy is for students living all around the world. It boasts a vibrant international student body and provides an individualized learning plan for each student. The Keystone School is also international but offers a more flexible approach. The student chooses the level of teacher interaction, format of class, multiple course levels, and can start any time of year with a full time or part time enrollment. (K-12 Online Private Schools, 2014)

 The George Washington Online High School is the third K-12 option. It is for students who seek a complete college preparatory experience. It partners with George Washington University and boasts the aspects of a brick and mortar school in an online setting. This school provides an individualized learning experience with small class sizes, leadership training programs, travel learning opportunities, and intensive personalized college counseling. (K-12 Online Private Schools, 2014)

 Time4Learing is a private online education program for preschool to high school. It can be used as homeschool curriculum, after school and summer tutorials, and as a test preparation tool. This school offers the option for students to have access to two to three grade levels so they can move at their own pace. Often students are able to move ahead. It is student focused, convenient and flexible. It also provides parents with various tools for lesson planning, activity planning, and parent reviews. (Time for Learning, 2014) This education program seems to be very helpful for the newer home school parents since it provides a lot of guidance and support.

 Some universities are offering online high schools. Since colleges want to protect their reputation, these schools offer high quality education. The cost and admission policies vary between schools. Students can earn college credits while working on their high school diplomas in some cases. This is of great benefit for anyone planning on continuing to college. (Littlefield, 2014)

**Home School Results**

 For many years home schools have received scrutiny in the public eye. Critics believe that home schooling causes children lack the needed social skills. The National Education Association maintains that “homeschooling cannot provide the student with a comprehensive learning experience”. (Clouthier, 2014) I believe that this thought came about because of the radical home school parents of the 1970’s. The results have definitively proven this school of thought to be incorrect.

 There have been many times that home school students have received national awards in spelling, geography, science and math. On standardized test, home school students perform just as well or better than public school students. More than 200 colleges, including Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, actively seek home school students because of their advanced social skills and high SAT scores. (Driscoll, 2014)

 Studies of post-graduation home school students find that they vote more often, read more books, and are more involved in their communities. Overall they even seem to be happier. These studies have American’s wondering what home school kids get that public and private schools don’t provide. (Driscoll, 2014)

 A compilation of Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores found that the majority of 20,760 home school students scored significantly higher than their public and private school counterparts. They scored between the 75th and 85th percentile while public school students scored at the 50th percentile and private school students scored between 65th and 75th percentile. There was variance in performance in gender and race in public school students but home school students showed more uniform performance. (Ray, 2013)

 Several other studies have shown that home school students are more mature, friendlier, and happier than public school students. A study conducted in 1986, showed that home school students had higher self-esteem than public school students. They also have fewer behavior problems and appear to be more patient and less competitive than public school students. (Clouthier, 2014).

**Conclusion**

 Home schooling has become a very attractive option for parents. Studies show that students seem to excel in the home school setting. Home schooling provides students with the individual learning experiences that allows them to maximize their potential. Home schooling appears to provide them with the educational and social tools needed to succeed in college and in life. The Online Resources that are available give parents an endless toolbox to use to provide a homeschool education.

“People are correct when they say online education will take things out of the classroom”. (Lohr, 2009) The online options for education are growing daily. We are fortunate to be involved in the building phase of online education. The combination of the home school structure and online educational resources will continue to provide parents with boundless opportunities to provide their children with the best education possible.

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