

DCSD School Choice Task Force

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Home Education as a School Choice

*How DCSD can expand and improve school choice
through home based education*

Home Education as a School Choice

How DCSD can expand and improve school choice through home based education

Acknowledgements:

We want to personally thank each of the families, who are too many to name, in contributing to this research and report. We are so grateful to you for welcoming the DCSD School Choice Task Force into your education world and providing a glimpse of your children's personal learning environment. It is with much respect for you as parents and educators that we hope to provide wise recommendations to the Douglas County leadership, which will support and encourage families who teach at home for generations to come.

We want to send a special thank you to Peter Hilts, Mary Perez, Becky Van Vleet, and Rollie Stoneman, of The Classical Academy (Colorado Springs) for so openly sharing their programs and knowledge with us.

Much appreciation is also due the DCSD Board of Education for inviting each of us serving on the home education committee for this enlightening journey in seeking improved support and relationship with home educators of Douglas County.

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Definition of Homeschoolingⁱ:

Title 22, Colorado Revised Statutes: Education Article 33: School Attendance Law of 1963 Section 104.5, as amended

22-33-104.5. Home-based education - legislative declaration - definitions - guidelines

(1) The general assembly hereby declares that it is the primary right and obligation of the parent to choose the proper education and training for children under his care and supervision. It is recognized that home-based education is a legitimate alternative to classroom attendance for the instruction of children and that any regulation of nonpublic home-based educational programs should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate a variety of circumstances. The general assembly further declares that *nonpublic home-based educational programs shall be subject only to minimum state controls which are currently applicable to other forms of nonpublic education.*

(2) As used in this section:

(a) "Nonpublic home-based educational program" means the sequential program of instruction for the education of a child which takes place in a home, which is provided by the child's parent or by an adult relative of the child designated by the parent, and which is not under the supervision and control of a school district. This educational program is not intended to be and does not qualify as a private and nonprofit school.

(b) "Parent" includes a parent or guardian.

(c) "Qualified person" means an individual who is selected by the parent of a child who is participating in a nonpublic home-based educational program to evaluate such child's progress and who is a teacher licensed pursuant to article 60.5 of this title, a teacher who is employed by an independent or parochial school, a licensed psychologist, or a person with a graduate degree in education.

DCSD definition of homeschoolingⁱⁱ:

- Student is registered with an intent to home school with DCSD, or
- Student is registered with an intent to home school with a non-DCSD entity, or
- Student is dual-enrolled part-time in homeschooling and DCSD services, or
- Student is dual-enrolled part-time in homeschooling and non-DCSD services, or
- Student is learning within the Colorado Department of Education's definition of home based education, without the registration or participation of any services
- A district operated online school is not defined as homeschooling in DCSD due to funding structures, although virtual learning is a recognized education option and model for homeschoolers.

Preface:

Every year nearly two million parents (NCES, 2009)ⁱⁱⁱ make or renew the commitment to home school their children. It is the ultimate version of parental involvement in education and student centered learning. Families who opt for homeschooling make significant investments/sacrifices of time and money for the benefit of their children's academics. In exchange the families gain complete control of their children's education, have the ability to customize each child's learning plans according to their needs, maintain the freedom to teach their children religious values, and spend more family together time than would be possible if the child was away five days a week.

Homeschooling, which was the mainstream education form prior to the Industrial Revolution and implementation of government-run schools, is experiencing quite the comeback in popularity with families today. Homeschoolers represent about 2.9%^{iv} of school-aged children, a number that is projected to increase at a rate of 8% per year. With rising figures nationally concerning school safety and lack of education quality, the number of parents who take back control of their children's education will surely rise.

But home educators do not take their children and crawl under a rock. While mere decades ago curriculum and resources designed for the home environment was scarce and far between, today's homeschoolers have a vast inventory of secular and non-secular materials from which to choose. Much of this material is created by other home educators and their families who offer their discoveries and innovation for sale or share. Curriculum publishers have also followed suit in creating materials specifically for this booming market. Couple this with developing online education and savvy schools who offer part-time programs and a la carte academic options – and a peek into the future world of customer- (parent-)driven education emerges.

The modern homeschooler is not an antisocial, old-fashioned individual who rejects academic principles and common sense, but a *savoir-faire* education connoisseur, who will go to whatever lengths necessary to create the highest quality learning program possible for their children.

This text was created by request of the Douglas County School District (DCSD) Board of Education (BOE), in response to parent and community requests for the creation of a School Choice Task Force. The School Choice Task Force was given the mission to research and make recommendations to the BOE as to how DCSD might expand and improve school choice to meet local educational demands. This portion of the research was conducted by parents and district leaders who opted to represent the home education population.

The group conducted a two-month investigation on current level of DCSD and non-DCSD services, desired improvements and outcomes. We visited with home educators and school leaders, read various piece of literature and researched the topic online. It was important to the committee to make recommendations that were truly reflective of the requests of the home education families over suggesting programming which were

solely derived within the existing school district services. The existing organic nature of home education is its strength and mainstay. It is important to protect this essence to maintain the integrity of why homeschooling is both attractive to families and effective as a learning philosophy.

That brings us to the public education element of DCSD.

The Preamble to the United States Constitution indicates that the government is, empathetically and true, a government of the people.^v The Colorado constitution grants the legislature authority to require all children between the ages of 6 and 17 to attend a public school, “unless educated by other means.”^{vi} The legislature specifically has exempted homeschoolers from the compulsory requirement, and in 1988 established legal guidelines granting parents significant freedom to educate their children at home.^{vii} The message is that the DCSD Board of Education (as a locally-elected government of the people) should include the best interest of all children (including homeschoolers) when seeking to improve quality.

This is not a recommendation for DCSD, or any other government entity, to get involved beyond their task in home education. The best interest of a child educated at home is defined and ruled by the parent. Therefore, it is supporting the homeschooling parent which will most benefit the education of a child who is educated at home.

The recommendations in this report have been carefully made with the intent to preserve homeschooling quintessence, as well as to increase the effectiveness in which DCSD may support home educators upon invitation.

Research Strategy:

1. Define DCSD Homeschool Student

- a. Student who is learning at home and registered with DCSD
- b. Student who is learning at home and registered with someone other than DCSD
- c. Student who is learning at home is unregistered
- d. Student who is learning at home with dual registration in homeschooling AND:
 1. Colorado Cyber School, or
 2. DCSD school-based program, or
 3. DCSD charter School-based program, or
 4. Registered as DCSD homeschooling student and non-DCSD services

2. Conduct Investigation

- a. Visit other homeschooling programs of interest
 1. The Classical Academy Charter School
 2. Aurora Public School Options
 3. Platte River Academy
 4. Academy Charter School
- b. Visit with homeschooling support groups
 1. Parker Homeschooling Coalition
 2. Regional “listening” forums
- c. Determine services that are attractive for homeschooling families
 1. Curriculum and resources: books and materials, advise and selection, purchase options
 2. Access to extracurricular activities and before/after school programs (sports, arts, music, etc.)
 3. Parent/Educator training and support
 4. Social gatherings for students and parents
 5. Enhanced outreach to children who are ill or cannot attend school for family reasons
 6. Year round education and enrichment opportunities: summer programs and camps
 7. Improved communication on available services and programs
 - a. Website (content and navigation)
 8. Satisfaction and future needs feedback

3. Explore Funding

- a. Financial viability of current or increased services
- b. Cost savings if all services removed
- c. Estimated cost of proposed increase in services

4. Possible Recommendation Options

- a. Terminate current services and only provide state mandated support
- b. Retain current level of support and services
- c. Increase services and opportunities to homeschool families

History and Current Level of Service:

In 1998, homeschooling responsibilities fell under the responsibilities of the Charter School and Home School Liaison who reported to the Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services. The percentage of time allocated to homeschooling (per job descriptions) was less than 50% of the contracted time. The homeschool budget contained only a very small allocation for postage. Homeschool registration totaled approximately 300.

Homeschool staff responsibilities at that time were to answer phone calls from parents wanting to know how to register for homeschooling, directing parents to their neighborhood schools if they were interested in dual enrollment and keeping a database of registrations. Homeschool information was not shared with other departments or schools. The district webpage contained no homeschooling information for either Douglas County or Colorado.

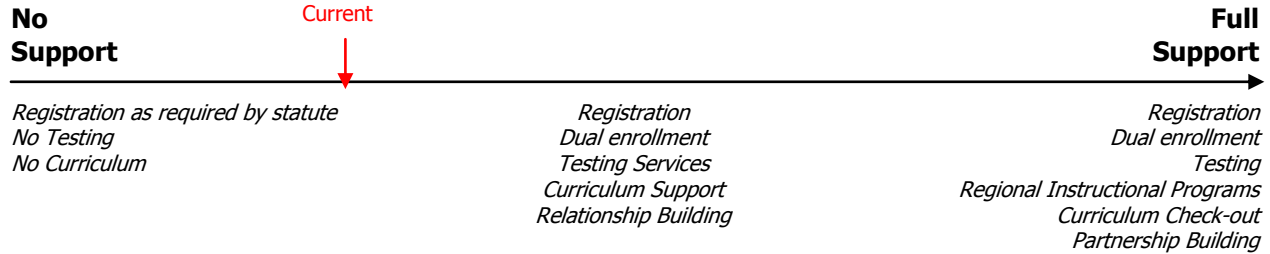
In 2005, more than a year after the retirement of the Charter School and Home School Liaison, the Options Coordinator position was created. This position was paired with charter school responsibilities on a less than 50% allocation.

In 2010, a Home School Coordinator position (0.5 FTE) was created solely for the purpose of addressing the needs of homeschoolers. Total homeschool registrations were 794 on June 30, 2010.

Over the years, processes and service are improving according to the following measures:

1. Homeschool registrations are entered into the district's Infinite Campus system.
2. Dual enrollment procedures are in place.
3. MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) test is administered each year for any homeschooler wishing to be tested with detailed reports offered to the parent to help drive instruction if they so desire.
4. Special Education services are coordinated between the Home School Office, Special Education Services and the neighborhood schools.
5. Homeschooler participation in athletics is coordinated between the Home School Office, the District Athletic Office and the neighborhood schools.

Level of Service Continuum



Staff: DCSD provides a .5 FTE Home School Coordinator. The job description includes, “evaluate and counsel parents’ requests for alternative learning choices, ensuring acceptance of credits for transfer or dual enrollment options” and “coordinate/administer mandated assessments for students.”

Dual Enrollment: Homeschooled children are welcome to participate in core, special, or elective classes at all grade levels as part of our regular school curriculum on a space available basis. All students, including elementary, must be in attendance for at least 90 hours per semester. Interested parents fill out a Dual Enrollment Application and contact the school where their child would attend to complete the process. The district receives .5 Per Pupil Revenue for these students.

DLMC: Homeschooled parents are also welcome to use the District Library Media Center materials. These materials include books, videotapes, anatomical models and culture kits. There are some restrictions to the accessibility and length of use due to limited material availability.

Testing: Colorado law requires that homeschooled children’s academic progress be evaluated at grades 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. This can be done by having their child tested with a nationally-normed standardized achievement test of their choice (the CSAP does not meet Colorado law requirements) or through an evaluation done by a qualified person. DCSD offers testing sessions each year for interested parents. The tests cover Reading, Language Usage and Math. There is a minimal charge for taking these tests to cover the administration fee.

Charter School Programs: Two DCSD charter schools offer some programming to families who educate at home. There are no classes offered exclusively to homeschoolers past the 8th grade.

- Academy Charter School (ACS) offers Spanish and Science lessons to homeschoolers at multiple locations. The class schedule is a 3 hour learning block which offers a combination of the two subjects K-4th grade. In 5th grade the science curriculum includes some extensive lab units, so the entire 3 hour sessions are allotted to the science component through 8th grade. Therefore Spanish is not offered beyond 4th grade. ACS is currently serving about 160 students K-8th grade.
- Platte River Academy (PRA) Charter School offers a part time homeschooling program which serves between 16 and 23 families K-6th annually. The classes are designed

based on parent input and include Spanish, science, writing, and specials. Students meet once per week.

Context:

The Douglas County School District (DCSD) spans 843 square miles, making it the 3rd largest school district in Colorado. In the 2009-10 school year, DCSD served 59,932 K-12 students in 79 different school locations (56,180.5 FTE).^{viii}

On June 30, 2010, 794 homeschooled students were registered with DCSD. Much indicates that this number is not an accurate estimation of how many Douglas County residents home school. Families can register with other organizations than the geographical school district for their home, and some opt not to register with any entity. This is not surprising. Douglas County School District is well known for its pursuit of academic rigor, parental involvement and school choice. In addition to a range of traditional, magnet, charter and online program— home education is another choice for families in Douglas County.

In 2010, the DCSD BOE invited parents, school leaders and the community at large to participate in a school choice task force. These individuals were charged with the task of making recommendations to the BOE as to how DCSD might expand and improve school choice to families in Douglas County. Seven areas of interest were identified as areas for investigation.

The DCSD School Choice Task Force Home Education Committee carefully evaluated current services, investigated needs and possible options through visits to other programs, various literature and online research, and through discussions with home educators.

Intellectual Capital:

The most precious source of intellectual capital in the home learning environment is the student.

It is often the learning needs— academic, spiritual and emotional— which spur a family’s interest in home schooling. A home environment offers 1:1 teaching and group learning if there are siblings or family partnerships involved.

Each home-educated child has an individual learning plan, but not necessarily of the definition as that term implies in the public school classroom. Instead, each child’s needs are tended to by a home professional (the parent, guardian or learning coach) regardless of ability and age. It is truly an education custom fit. Different families come about this in various ways. There are diverse homeschooling approaches including, but not limited to; school-at-home method, unit studies, living books, un-schooling, Classical, Waldorf, Montessori and eclectic.^{ix}

Learning often begins much before the compulsory school age for public education. Most of the home educators we spoke with had preschool-aged children, or said they began teaching much before traditional students go to school. Many home educators believe in a more natural form of learning, which makes identifying a true “school age” difficult. Several of the children we met were in 2nd or 3rd grade textbooks by the time they reached age 5. Parents stated that it made no sense for them to send their children to public school knowing there weren’t multi-aged classrooms in DCSD that could easily accommodate this need. Parents voiced a desire for home school specific programming which would be designed with this in mind.

On the other end of the age group range, we found many homeschooled youngsters enter college level classes in their “high school years.” The Classical Academy Charter School’s (TCA) College Pathways program, in Colorado Springs, is set up in partnership with home educators and Pikes Peak Community College to accomplish dual credits. College Pathways students, who attend school as little as once a week and learn at home (plus online) the remainder of the time, graduate high school with weighted college credits – or possibly an Associate’s Degree. It is notable that the extra college courses come at no extra expense to the parent or the taxpayers.

College Pathways is merely a year old. Last year more than 90% of its high school students tested college ready.^x The program is serving 100 children in grades seven through twelve in 2010-11. Other college-ready home learners might take correspondence courses or dual enroll into various universities paid for by their parents.

The spectrum for student needs and abilities are indeed broad just as for non-homeschooled students. We met families who home school to better serve learning disabilities, medical requirements and severe allergies. The homeschooling families we met with indicated a desire for vision, hearing and ancillary services and accommodations within programs offered, as well as vision and hearing screening.

There is also another type of homeschooler– the part-time homeschooler. This family supplements their child’s schooling with home learning. The children go to private or public schools and receive academic enrichment at home outside school hours. Generally these families don’t label themselves as homeschooling but rather use different terms such as tutoring, summer reading, homework help or I’m-just-helping-Johnny-get-this-math-concept. In other words, all parents teach their children whether they know it or not. What DCSD has already figured out is that a tremendous component of any K-12 education intellectual capital comes in the form of parents.

The “part-time homeschooler” is more often called a highly-involved parent and is credited with making a significant difference in student success outcomes. Researchers have even tried to put a monetary amount on what it would cost to replace the effectiveness of a highly-involved parent.^{xi}

“Parental effort is consistently associated with higher levels of achievement and the magnitude of the effect of parental effort is substantial. “We found that schools would need to increase per-pupil spending by more than \$1,000 in order to achieve the same results that are gained with parental involvement,” said Karen Smith Conway, professor of economics at the University of New Hampshire, when interviewed by *Science Daily* in 2008.

There is also a link between parental involvement and decrease in student behavioral issues,^{xii} as well as research showing that children who bully have problems with other relationships (parents, friends, and siblings).^{xiii}

In short, any school or district would do well by the student, teachers, and student’s peers by partnering with parents and empowering solid emotional and academic support from home, whether part-time or full-time.

The term home educator describes the parent or caretaker who is responsible for the child’s home education. The educational background of the home educator varies. As there is no degree required to be a parent, neither is there a certification process for teaching one’s own children. This thought might turn public education philosophies about teacher qualifications on its ear. However, what the home educator has in his or her advantage is the fact that s/he is not dealing with a classroom of 20-30 unrelated students of ranging ability and backgrounds. The home educator is also likely one of the persons who cares the most about that particular student in his or her care. This makes the home educator especially in tuned with the child’s needs much beyond the academic setting.

As mentioned previously, the home educator is typically an astute education customer, and uses innovative approaches in reaching academic outcomes. And they don’t need to do it alone. While some homeschoolers prefer to education their children completely independently from outside resources – even creating their own teaching materials – others seek assistance for subjects where their own expertise may be limited. This

additional intellectual capital includes; but is not limited to, tutors, churches, support groups, libraries, umbrella schools, as well as private and public education programs. An analogy might be: a parent cares for a healthy child daily without feeling the need to hold the hand of a pediatrician. There are ailments that can be treated at home with a kiss and a band-aid or some Tylenol. However, when the child breaks his leg and needs to see a specialist, mom rushes him to see a professional. When it comes to a child's learning, not everything is surgery or requires a pedigreed professional. As a matter of fact, most days don't even require a band-aid. But if need arises the home educator will employ the best resource for the job. That is why the home educator's choosiness can pay off in effectiveness when the professional is called in. It should be considered an honor when trusted with the homeschooled child. There tends to be a trust issue between the home educator and government programs (see spiritual capital). This is partially because home educators are not always viewed by non-homeschoolers to be as qualified as a traditional teacher.

So how do home-educated students achieve in comparison to public schooled children?

Research indicates that children who learn at home in parent-driven education achieve in various settings. In 2000, Stanford University accepted 27% of the applications filed by homeschooled students.^{xiv} Harvard accepts 10 applications per year specifically from students who have had at least some homeschooling. A statement from Harvard was issued saying those homeschooled students who attend Harvard are usually very motivated at what they are doing.

According to a study conducted by the National Home Education Research Institute, when compared to public education peers, homeschoolers outperform on national assessments. In 2008 the average homeschooled students (who took the California Achievement Test, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and/or the Stanford Achievement Test) scored at the 89th percentile; language, 84th percentile; math, 84th percentile; science, 86th percentile; and social studies, 84th percentile. In the core studies (reading, language and math), the average homeschooler scored at the 88th percentile.^{xv} The average public schooled student scored around the 50th percentile in each subject.

Social Capital:

A hotly debated issue in home education is socialization. Contrary to common beliefs, teaching a child at home will not make a recluse. As Marsha Ransom, author of “The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Homeschooling,”^{xvi} points out, “When was the last time you were in a setting with 30 individuals born the same year?—Your high school reunion?”

Today, millions of perfectly intelligent and well-balanced adults work from home offices without becoming antisocial. Likewise, stay-at-home parents are kept busy with their family obligations, friendships and networking. If we apply the same logic to families who teach at home, we can clearly see how kids stay involved with peers and community even if they don’t perch on a chair in the same room as a couple dozen kids the same age. Even so, do all kids click with each other just because they are on the same class roster? Sure, we all need to learn how to cope with people we don’t necessarily choose to be around, but what do academics have to do with it?

Can children who have not attended regular schools fit into society when they mature?

“Of course,” Jennifer Kaufeld, author of “Homeschooling for Dummies,” writes.^{xvii} “Your child sees wisdom at work as she watches you plan and complete tasks, interact with people in your community, and schedule your life to get (almost) everything done. She learns your values and morals as she listens to what you say and watches what you do.”

A “home school” is often well connected to a strong social network. As mentioned, home educators use a range of resources like libraries, tutors, umbrella programs, community centers, other homeschooling families, friends and extended family, churches, support programs, businesses, private and public schools. Interestingly, the weakest link in networking is commonly the latter. The reason is usually trust, poor communication, and a misunderstanding (often on both sides) of the other entity and its education function.

The homeschooling families we spoke with would like to see extended programming offered to homeschoolers, but do not know where to find it or how to enroll. Many questions were raised about dual enrollment and why there is an inconsistency from school to school of how homeschoolers are greeted and serviced. When asked what resources they would value, this list was provided nearly identically each of the three days we spent interviewing families:

- A la carte education options
- Language
- Athletics
- Drama, music and specials
- Workshops on home school topics
- Tutoring services
- P-20 services
- Science classes

- Vision, hearing, ancillary access
- Language Arts (particularly writing)
- Upper math
- Curriculum check out services
- Multi-grade classes
- Integrated home school/public school options PLUS home school exclusive classes
- District level representation for homeschool advocacy
- Consistent and clear communication with easy access for parents
- Dual enrollment information (with clear and consistent communication)
- Gifted and talented services

Financial Capital:

Teaching at home, like teaching in a classroom, takes resources. And, like a classroom teacher, a home educator usually makes additional investments beyond the moneys already paid in taxes for public education.

Thankfully, home education is not limited to expensive textbooks and services. Many home educators are clever shoppers and often times create inexpensive learning opportunities which are at least as effective. With that said, there is still a need for curriculum and services for many home students. Some of the free and/or purchased resources used by families we visited with include: textbooks (secular and/or religious), consumables, tutoring and class services, museum visits, business internships, online courses, library services, athletic clubs, drama and the arts, science supplies, computers and technology, and much more.

One family estimated their total education spending to be \$400 per year. This family has three children (there was no mention if this amount was per child). Another parent said they spend \$3,500 per year, including all materials, to educate one child through a private online umbrella program.

All families surveyed were enthusiastically supportive of the idea of a curriculum checkout service through DCSD. Even if some materials may not be available, much of the curriculum used by homeschoolers is by the same publishers as what is used or approved within DCSD (ex. Saxon, Shurley grammar, Classical Literature). A textbook checkout service would create access to tax-funded education materials for the home educator.

Home education costs much less than traditional classroom education. There is no facility cost beyond the family's own rent or mortgage, staff costs are pared down to specifically hired tutors (if any), transportation does not need to accommodate 50 children, and special clothing such as brand names and uniforms are unnecessary. The cost of school and district management is completely removed. This is why the parent who spent thousands on her children's home education through brand-name services still spends about half of what the district would receive to educate the same pupil in a classroom.

A student who home schools with dual enrollment into a public school program is funded at 0.5 FTE when in attendance greater than 90 and less than 360 student contact hours per semester. No public funding is currently available for students who attend less than 90 hours per semester; however, private tuition can be charged to the family to cover expenses for such circumstances. There is no variation of public funding for students who may be attending less than 360 hours but more than 90 hours.

Spiritual Capital Governance:

Spiritual capital refers to shared values, morals and ethics, which may or may not be religious in nature. The home education world is rich in all of the above.

The very reasons families opt to learn at home reflect commonly shared values such as family togetherness, academic rigor, emphasis on children's needs in education, parental leadership, safety concerns, character building for children, and freedom to teach one's children family values and religious belief in an educational setting.

High value is placed on knowledge and academics within the home education culture. As mentioned previously, families might be homeschooling for purposes of better meeting needs for children with learning and physical disabilities, or those of a child with gifted and talented tendencies.

School safety is also a rising concern among parents who may choose to keep their children home for their education. Others may not want their children exposed to certain values that crop up when a group of random youngsters are together (e.g., choice of language and actions, peer pressure, drug and alcohol references, sex, and spiritual comparisons). There are also plenty of families who teach at home simply because they enjoy being together.

Over the years an unfortunate distrust has grown between the homeschooling and school district cultures. Most of the distrust is related to miscommunications and a lack of understanding of the other culture. Most of the time there is good intent behind the interactions between both groups, but without sensitivity to certain buzzwords and inquires, friction can easily occur.

Tension also exists between some of the homeschooling groups. Some parents we spoke with said they have been criticized for their education choices by both public school-goers and by parents within the homeschooling community. These disagreements are mostly about who is considered a "true homeschooler." Some express that families who opt for assistance of online services, or government-funded programs, are not in the same category as those who do not. Unfortunately, this creates a divide among homeschoolers, who have fought so hard together to preserve the right to teach at home.

Veteran homeschoolers with whom we met the first day of our public meetings expressed a desire for an entity that will unite home school philosophies and resources under one roof— existing for the purpose of families over serving a single organization. They stated how valuable it would be if DCSD or another entity would create a group that supports homeschoolers overall, not only DCSD students. The website was suggested to contain more of both DCSD and non-DCSD resources, group information, and more.

Summary:

Current Level of Service

Staff: DCSD provides a .5 FTE Home School Coordinator. The job description includes, “evaluate and counsel parents’ requests for alternative learning choices, ensuring acceptance of credits for transfer or dual enrollment options” and “coordinate/administer mandated assessments for students.”

Dual Enrollment: Homeschooled children are welcome to participate in core, special, or elective classes at all grade levels as part of our regular school curriculum on a space available basis. All students, including elementary, must be in attendance for at least 90 hours per semester. Interested parents fill out a Dual Enrollment Application and contact the school where their child would attend to complete the process.

DLMC: Homeschooled parents are also welcome to use the District Library Media Center materials. These materials include books, videotapes, anatomical models and culture kits. There are some restrictions to the accessibility and length of use due to limited material availability.

Testing: DCSD offers testing sessions each year for interested parents. These tests cover Reading, Language Usage and Math. There is a minimal charge for taking these tests to cover the administration fee.

Charter School Programs: Two DCSD charter schools offer some programming to families who educate at home. There are no classes offered exclusively to homeschoolers past the 8th grade.

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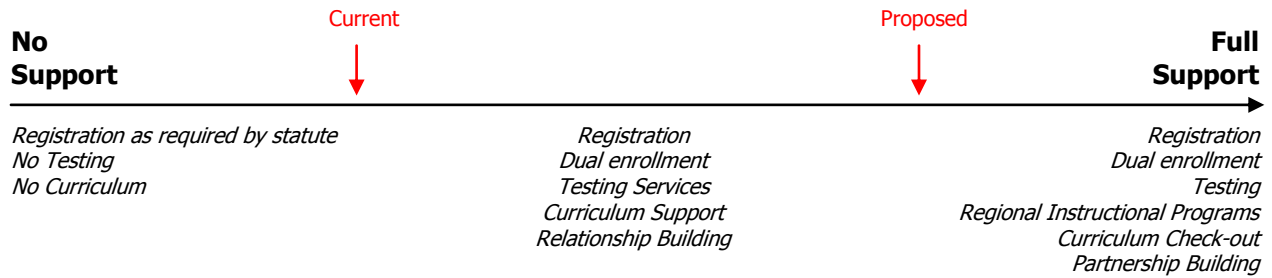
Key Themes from this Study

1. There is a trust issue between home educators and school districts in general based on a history of limited funding, a lack of understanding of one another as education providers, and consequently, poor two-way communication.
2. School district financial support of home education services is not in existence today. State per pupil revenue does not cover homeschooled children unless they are dual enrolled. Although DCSD provides limited services, the perception seems to be that these services are not marketed well or are difficult to access.

3. Much of the miscommunication that has happened in the past is unintentional. Some “government school” terminology is objectionable to some home educators. Terms like “licensed teachers” and “state standards” are common in our public school discourse, but seen as demeaning to the true home educators.
4. Support goes beyond just offering more services. Communicating acceptance of this educational choice to all district service providers is critical to creating partnerships with this currently underserved student population.

The DCSD School Choice Task Force Home Education Committee feels it has created a healthy dialogue with a small group of home educators and hopes to continue to build on this relationship in an effort to create a long standing, trusting educator-to-educator relationship.

Recommendations:



The DCSD School Choice Task Force Home Education Committee recommends a staff increase (from .5 FTE to 1.0 FTE) to better serve the needs for the expanding home school community. We suggest the following responsibilities:

0.5 DCSD Staff: Home Education Coordinator (current position)

- Registration services
- Testing options
- Curriculum services

0.5 DCSD Staff: Home Education Advocate (additional responsibilities)

- Resource development/networking
- Development of website and evaluation of communication
- Program Development (including P-20, online, hybrid, and dual enrollment)
- Communicate shared commitment to homeschool education

Furthermore the DCSD School Choice Task Force Home Education Committee would like to set the following goals for DCSD Home Education Services:

- Automate registration process for ease of access and cost efficiency
- Expand the home education community network (social and intellectual capital)
- For DCSD to build district support for its schools (including charters and partnerships) which do service home education*
- Provide access to resources and courses with district wide consistency
- Internal district wide communication about home education and how to build partnerships
- Hearing, Vision, ancillary services clearly advertised and inviting to all home educators
- Significantly improved communication through web content, mailings, and other media forms
- Develop 5 year strategic plan including comprehensive P-20 services which will become a model for strengthening family-public education relationships nationwide

References and Endnotes:

ⁱ Colorado Department of Education, <http://www.cde.state.co.us>.

ⁱⁱ As per discussions within DCSD School Choice Task Force Home Education Committee.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, Participation in Education (2009).

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- iv National Home Education Research Institute (Dec. 2008),
v <http://www.nheri.org/Latest/U.S.-Homeschool-Population-Size-and-Growth-Comments.html>.
- vi http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution.
- vii The right to education is enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The right to education has also been reaffirmed in the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1st Protocol of ECHR and the 1981 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
UNESCO and UNICEF, "A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All," (2007), pg. 7, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001548/154861E.pdf>.
Article IX, § 11.
Colo. Rev. Statutes § 22-33-104(2)(i); 22-33-104.5. For detailed information on how the legislation came to pass, see Marya DeGrow, Colorado's Homeschool Law Turns Twenty: The Battle Should Never Be Forgotten, Independence Institute Issue Paper 12-2008 (December 2008), <http://education.i2i.org/2008/12/colorados-homeschool-law-turns-twenty-the-battle-should-never-be-forgotten-2/>.
- viii http://www.dcsdk12.org/portal/page/portal/DCSD/District_Information/Welcome.
- ix The Complete Idiot's Guide to Homeschooling, by Marsha Ransom (Alpha Books).
- X Students are encouraged to take the Accuplacer test for college readiness after Algebra II.
- xi <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080527123852.htm>.
- xii <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/05/100514074915.htm>.
- xiii <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/03/080325083300.htm>.
- xiv <http://www.hslda.org/docs/nche/000002/00000234.asp>.
- xv <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/aug/30/home-schooling-outstanding-xvireresults-national-tests/print/>.
- xvi The Complete Idiot's Guide to Homeschooling, by Marsha Ransom (Alpha Books).
- xviii Homeschooling for Dummies, by Jennifer Kaufeld (Wiley Publishing).
- Xix http://www.dcsdk12.org/portal/page/portal/DCSD/Center_For_Staff_and_Community_Development/Home_School/DistrictLibraryMediaCenterGuidelines.pdf.
- xx http://www.dcsdk12.org/portal/page/portal/DCSD/Center_For_Staff_and_Community_Development/Home_School/HomeSchoolGuidelines1011.pdf.
- *Item added after the October Task Force Presentation
