

Summary of Home School Students July 2009

Overview

The survey of parents whose children reside in the Madison Metropolitan School District attendance area and select a home schooling environment was conducted between December 2008 and February 2009. The source of the parent list was compiled DPI form PI-1206. A total of 224 surveys were mailed to households, representing over 400 students. Two attempts to contact households via mail were made two weeks apart. There were 41 households who replied representing 75 students. The corresponding household response rate was 18 percent.

Descriptive Information

A large majority of households that home school their children and who responded to the survey cite environmental concerns as their primary reason for making that decision. Parent control and flexibility combined with environmental concerns accounted for over half of the primary reasons reported by respondents.

When asked if their students ever attended an MMSD school over half responded that they had previously attended.

Survey Responses

A majority of parents whose children are home schooled cited environment as their primary concern when deciding to choose home schooling.

	Environment concern	Flexibility	Parent Connection	Religious	Curriculum	Child's Choice	Special Needs	Health
Percentage of Responses	23%	20%	17%	14%	9%	8%	5%	4%
Percentage of Respondents	71%	62%	52%	43%	29%	26%	17%	12%

The following are examples of comments relating to "Environment Concerns:"

- *The safety of our children. Every time I visited the schools, doors weren't locked, no one asked me to go to the office. I had the freedom to walk around the school and was able to walk in every door. This was a big concern for us due to our children being adopted and biological parents knowing where we are. It didn't seem safe for our kids.*
- *Morality of kids today. Curriculum based on my child's needs.*
- *All of child's stress comes from school, especially the complicated social structures at school. Child felt consistently at bottom of social structure with few friends and no way to "climb the ladder" in spite of high grades, sports and other extra-curricular activities.*
- *My daughter was bothered both by the books that were present in the library in 2nd grade and also the lack for her reading level of others that seemed not present for wrong motives - most books were fantasy, mystery or witch type and authors were post -60s very few were pre - 1960's. Our daughter was distressed by the bullying she witnessed, particularly of those that*

were disabled, "cognitively-challenged, overtly religious, "poor," or just "different" in their values. Most intervention focused on race of "styles," not the others.

The following are examples of comments regarding "Flexibility:"

- *General dissatisfaction with institutionalized education. We like the individualized flexibility and innovative pedagogy options available with a cue-to-cue learning relationship.*
- *Can go at pace fitting for each child and delve deeper into areas of interest particular to him/our family. Provide grounding in our own family's values. Gives ample time for developing relationship with siblings and parents. Lack of classic education in language, reading, mathematics and history.*
- *Ability to foster the interests of our children and provide extra support where needed.*
- *My son's transition to high school would have been easier if we had more help evaluating placement in math and for language classes. The teacher's at West were responsive to questions but a more formalized process of transitioning from home school to West would have been helpful.*
- *The other concern we had was the lack of instruction time for all kids involved (school wide). There were far too many movies - not related educationally and too many parties and games.*

The following are examples of comments regarding "Parent Connection:"

- *I want to spend more time with my children than going to school would allow them to.*
- *Student was a habitual truant, would not do one assignment and was failing. Home schooling gave me the opportunity to "sit on top of him," force him to do assignments, and separate him from his social group.*

The following are examples of comments regarding "Curriculum:"

- *Lack of classic education in language, reading, mathematics and history.*
- *Lack of school choice and programming for TAG students within the district. Please offer an academically challenging Charter School.*
- *Very little foreign language instruction*
- *Lack of TAG program - Son was in TAG at Midvale in K - but it was cut for 1st grade and he had no outlet - was in the same class everyday with no program for him - he was bored.*
- *Lack of school choice and programming for TAG students within the district. Please offer an academically challenging Charter School.*

The following are examples of comments regarding "Other, Specific or additional comments:"

- *Child has allergies to foods; bad first contact with school district. Seeking speech for pre-schooler - it was clear we were not a valued part of child's progress. We went private instead.*
- *Ability to foster the interests of our children and provide extra support where needed.*
- *My son's transition to high school would have been easier if we had more help evaluating placement in math and for language classes. The teacher's at West were responsive to questions but a more formalized process of transitioning from home school to West would have been helpful.*
- *The other concern we had was the lack of instruction time for all kids involved (school wide). There were far too many movies - not related educationally and too many parties and games. The movies, parties and games would have been fine if they pertained to actual school assignments, but unfortunately it was just playtime.*
- *Planning to apply for the option of taking two classes. I don't see why a student needs to be based at one school -- it would be great to be able to take one or two classes at one (or more) virtual schools, a class at MATC or UW, a class or two at the high*

school through the past - the attendance option. Our 12 year old, for example would probably enjoy/thrive in a college-level computer science class, next year, must have calculus at challenging high school or science, is ready for 2nd year high school Spanish, but would be in 8th grade English. So how do we find all of that in one building? I believe there should be more independent - study options within MMSD schools. Most classes follow a very strict model that is not based on what a student wants to learn at all. If there were independent-study options for credit at MMSD schools, I, as a student, would seriously consider attending my local high school.

MMSD Options

Parents of home schooled children were asked if they would consider given the choice of a full time online MMSD school as an educational option for their child. Nearly one third of the respondents (31%) reported they would be interested in a full-time online option. The same survey recipients were asked if they would consider enrolling in MMSD schools if they were allowed to choose their school of attendance. Just over one in five parents (22%) indicated they would be interested in a school choice option. MMSD also has an option that allows home schooled students the opportunity to take up to two courses per semester as a part-time student. One third of households responding to the survey did not know of this option and of those three-quarters wanted more information on how to enroll in these classes.