

The Knowledge House Guide to:

The Costs (and Rewards!) of Homeschooling

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Did you know that if you were to send your child to a boarding school where room and meals were provided, it would cost around \$32,000 per year! A private school will cost anywhere from \$6,000 - \$13,000 per year. Public schools receive an average of \$7,000 in tax money per student. The cost of homeschooling varies widely among families, with the average being about \$550 per student per year.

The amount that a family spends on homeschooling will depend, of course, on their household budget as well as on their particular goals and needs. Some families can afford to pay for new computers, private tutors, music lessons, special programs, summer camps, part-time college courses, lab equipment, lots of books and materials.

Homeschooling doesn't have to cost a fortune, however. Many families homeschool successfully and inexpensively by taking advantage of all the free information or low-cost resources that are available from public libraries, used booksellers, the internet, educational television programs, informal mentors, community classes, and by volunteering at museums.

The truth is, a good education can be obtained by using the most expensive curriculum materials or the cheapest curriculum materials. In fact, a good education can be had with no formal curriculum materials at all. Jesus was the greatest teacher who ever lived, and He taught His disciples simply by telling stories and writing in the dirt with a stick. The earliest American schools only had two textbooks – the King James Bible (for science, history, literature and English) and a hymnal (for music reading and singing).

Modern public schools have regularly demonstrated that increased spending does not necessarily improve the quality of education. Research shows that there is no positive correlation between student performance and money spent on education. More efficient individualized instruction, along with loving and caring parents, are what produce the best results.

In 1997, a study of 5,402 homeschool students from 1,657 families was released. It was entitled "*Strengths of Their Own: Home Schoolers Across America.*" In *Strengths of Their Own*, Dr. Brian Ray found the average cost per homeschool student was \$546 while the average cost per public school student was \$5,325. Yet the homeschool children in this study averaged in 85th percentile while the public school students averaged in the 50th percentile on nationally standardized achievement tests.

This was confirmed in another study by Dr. Lawrence Rudner of 20,760 homeschooled students, entitled *Home Schooling Works: The Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students in 1998*. Dr. Rudner found that eighth grade students whose parents spend \$199 or less on their home education score, on average, in the 80th percentile. Eighth grade students whose parents spend \$400 to \$599 on their home education also score on average in the 80th percentile. Students whose parents spend over \$600 do slightly better, scoring in the 83rd percentile.

While the first year of homeschooling is generally the most expensive, the majority of families will already have much of what they need at home such as pencils, paper, a computer, printer, and internet access. Once established, the costs to maintain a homeschool are small, especially if non-consumable curriculum is purchased which can be passed down to younger siblings. The second most expensive time in homeschooling is probably when children reach high school age, particularly if they take science labs or enroll in college classes.

However, the real issue is not how much it costs to homeschool, but what it would cost your family NOT to homeschool. The benefits of homeschooling your own children are something that money cannot buy. The valuable time that you and your children spend together is priceless. The infinite rewards of homeschooling are far beyond the grasp of the richest governments, yet easily within the reach of the poorest families.

Finally, remember that where God leads, God provides. When God calls you to homeschool your children, have faith that He will equip you with everything that is necessary to fulfill that calling. Don't worry about how much it's going to cost. Let go of your preconceptions of what you "must have" and enlist His aid in finding the materials that you need. As you prayerfully follow God's will by homeschooling your children, God will honor your commitment to your family and He will bless your homeschooling efforts.