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Could Homeschooling Really Grow by 500 Percent?

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There are about 2.5 million homeschooling children in the United States today. But what if there were 8 million *more* kids homeschooling in the fall?

There is reason to believe this could happen.

An [EdChoice public opinion poll](#) suggests that more than half of parents with school-age kids have a more favorable view of homeschooling after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A [Reason Foundation Facebook poll](#) conducted by Corey DeAngelis suggests that about 15 percent of all children could be making the switch to homeschooling in the fall. And a May 14, 2020, [Real Clear Opinion poll](#) of over 2,000 registered voters found that as many as 41% of parents are more likely to homeschool this fall.

It seems certain that parents and students will consider many different “new” options this year. This can only be more so as reports are making parents think twice about sending kids back to schools that will be mandating temperature checks, hand sanitizer, face masks/shield, social isolation, and staggered classes upon reopening. In France, some children are being told to [draw their own 6 foot by 6 foot](#) chalk squares where they can “enjoy” their recess. In England [some teachers have suggested](#) “spraying pupils with disinfectant”. All of this suggests that this coming school year will be anything but “back to school” as usual.

According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES), there are about 57 million school-aged children in the United States. Of these kids, about 50 million were enrolled in public schools, and 7 million were enrolled in private schools. In 2017, [Education Week](#) estimated that the number of children enrolled in public charter schools was 3 million.

If we use the *lower* percentage of possible “switchers” in the Reason poll, then about 7 million public school students, 420,000 public charter school and about 1 million private school students will be homeschooling later this year. That would be a whopping 8.5 million *more* homeschooled students. Adding the 2.5 millions of [current homeschoolers](#) gives us over 10 million students homeschooling this fall.

10 million kids homeschooling in the United States? Wow. That would be a jump of about 500 percent. If these polls are even remotely close, we are looking at major shifts that will have effects rippling all over in interesting and hard-to-predict ways.

For example, with fewer students in school, schools might have fewer teacher positions leading to possible staff reductions. Furloughed teachers might find work tutoring out-of-school kids or finding jobs with the new spate of start-ups taking advantage of the new demand of parents for out-of-school learning opportunities. Entrepreneurial start-up Outschool is [looking to hire](#) 5,000 teachers to meet the new demand. States seeing decreased revenue from taxes due to the economic impact of the shutdown measure might be glad to see less students showing up in the hallways so that their government budgets might be spared some of the per-pupil funding. Most of these costs would be borne by families which might put some pressure on policy makers. Tax credits would be one way to recognize this financial burden. Ten million homeschoolers equals a total “savings” of about \$127 billion at the average per pupil funding rate of just over \$12,000.

What might this mean for children?

For the 10 million plus kids who would be learning outside the four walls of the public, private, and charter schools there could be a lot more freedom and a lot less pressure. They and their parents will choose their own curriculum. They and their parents will choose their own flexible schedules. They will do education in a more life-integrated way, on their own timeline and on their own terms. Kids will have more time to play. To read. To explore things that interest them. To learn more at their own pace. To socialize in healthy ways, with less negative peer pressure and school-related issues like bullying.

[Some](#) have lamented this possible increase, worrying that more homeschooling will be bad for children. But the numbers show that the opposite is more likely true.

Vanderbilt University [Dr. Joseph Murphy's](#) comprehensive literature shows that homeschooling produces individuals who are *at least* as well educated and well socialized as their public or private school counterparts—a lot of research shows even better results. Homeschooling grads are more politically tolerant than their public or private school counterparts, says [Dr. Albert Cheng's](#) empirical study. [Dr. Lindsey Burke](#) found that a majority of research point to superior academic outcomes for homeschooling. Homeschooling is [diverse](#) contrary to the assertions of [others](#) that homeschooling is only done by “white conservative Christians”.

Harvard Law School graduate, author, Supreme Court clerk, and homeschool graduate Alex Harris says, “education was woven into everything we did in my family. There was always something to read and talk about around the dinner table. My parents never seemed to miss an opportunity for instruction. They were particularly adept at identifying what I was most passionate about, and then using that as a tool for teaching . . . They wanted us to love learning.”

What's not to like about that?

Who could have ever imagined that we would experience a global pandemic that would put 1.5 billion children in 190 countries out of school? Who would have imagined that entire countries and states would virtually shut down their economies?

If that can happen, why couldn't there be 10 million kids happily homeschooling this fall?

Even if some or even many of the new homeschoolers transitioned back to regular schools when things calm down and return to some normalcy – 10 million homeschooled children would have a significant (positive) long-term impact on how America does school. Based on how homeschooling has stacked up so far, that would be just fine for the kids, their families, and their country.