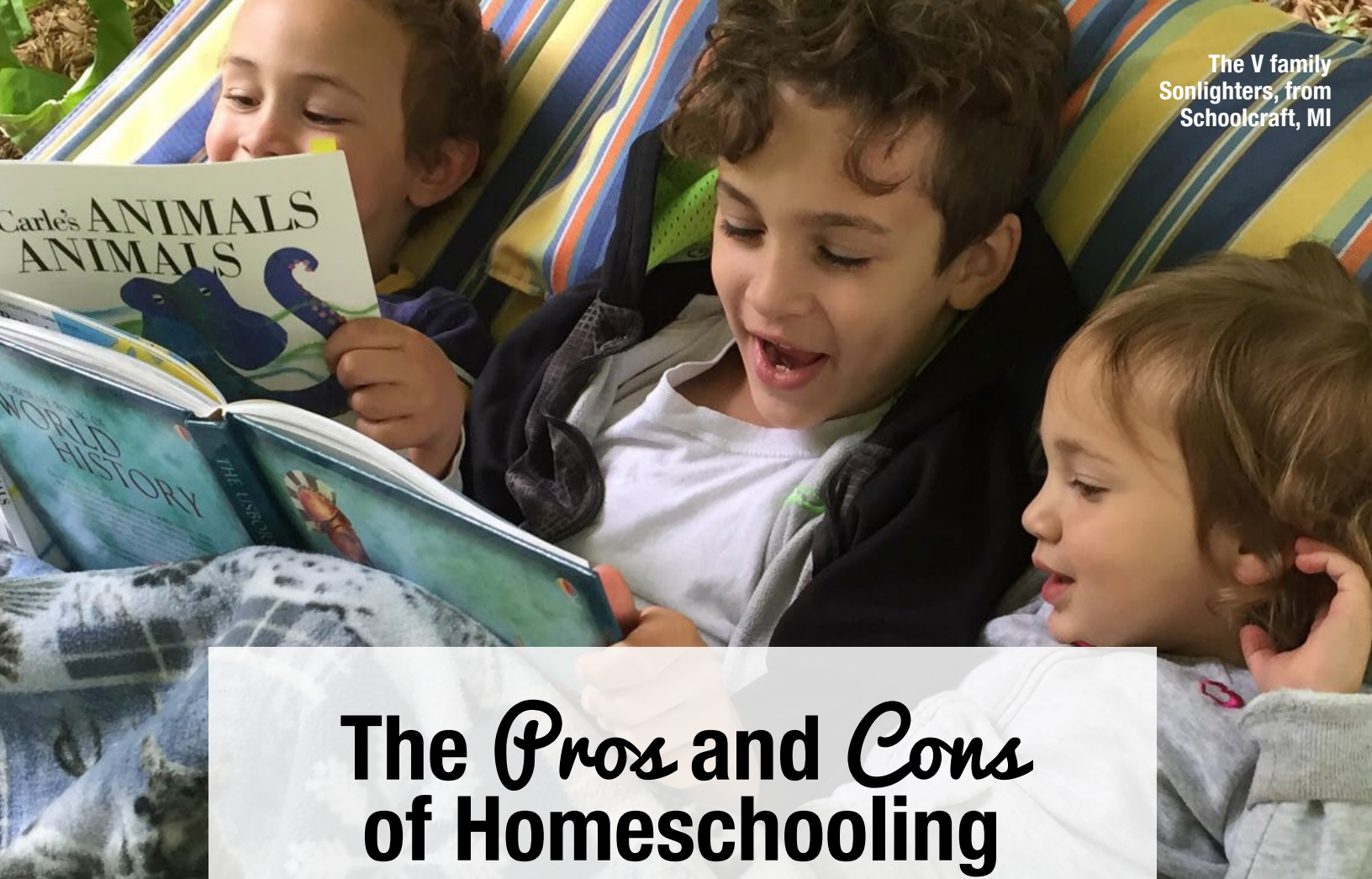


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The Pros and Cons of Homeschooling

Deciding Between Public, Private, or Home school



By: Kelly Lutman and Judy Whuk



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from Berlin, MD

Pros and Cons of the Homeschooling decision

Your children's education is a weighty responsibility.

Kudos to you for considering options beyond the default of public school.

If you're like most parents, you probably only experienced public education, and to consider any other type may feel overwhelming.

We invite you to join us as we consider the pros and cons of the three different types of schooling: public, private, and home.

And also, please know that there is no judgment here. For any education, you're making a decision not just about an education, but about your lifestyle. Make a decision based on what's right for your family this year, taking into account your family's unique circumstances.

And now, we are pleased to talk through some things for you to think about.



The H family Sonlighters,
from Sandord, NC

Public School

Let's start with the most familiar: public education. These schools are offered to all students without charge, paid for by tax revenue.

PROS of Public School

- Often, this may be the least expensive, as many of the fees are covered by taxes.
- Public schools often are conveniently located, with transportation provided. (Until you've spent ninety minutes a day in the private school's bus line, you may not have a good perspective on how helpful this actually is.) This doesn't apply to all public schools, but it may apply to yours.
- Public school is "normal," and, thus, well-accepted. You aren't likely to run into protests from concerned grandparents or friends when you want to put your children in the neighborhood school.
- Often, your children will have the opportunity for music and sports. These are widely available, and you don't have to be involved. (Depending on state law, some states allow homeschooled children to participate in public school sports, and some states do not.)
- Generally, access to government funding provides opportunities. Whether that be free evaluations for suspected learning disabilities, or dual enrollment, or reading specialists, or guidance counselors, public schools offer many advantages.

CONS of Public School

- "Free" public school is not actually free, and you might be surprised at the cost. Most schools have fees and mandatory back-to-school expenses. One mother reported spending \$200 on teacher appreciation gifts (not just for the teacher, but the aide and the bus driver and so on).
- Parents have no control over the curriculum or what is taught. With Common Core standards dictated nationally, even teachers have little control.
- Parents have no control over who their children's peers are. While a homeschooled family can—at least until a child has a driver's license—exercise some control over friends and acquaintances, parents of public schooled children cannot.
- And of course, ever since Columbine, every parent has some question about the issue of safety. And this doesn't just apply to weapons—this could also be bullying or sexual aggression.
- Most classrooms have a high student-teacher ratio. Some classrooms have only 15 to 1; some have as many as 30 to 1. As a result, some children fall through the cracks.

Private School

These schools are not administered by the government (local, state, or national). Because they are funded by tuition, the schools select their students and curriculum.

PROS of Private School

- On the whole, smaller student-teacher ratios than in public school.
- Often higher-quality instruction. In part, this happens because of the smaller student-teacher ratio, as students have more personal attention, and are not lost in a crowd.
- The schools have more choice in curriculum and methods of instruction.
- Depending on your choice, the school may reflect your religious convictions.
- Some schools offer specialized activities like arts and sports.

CONS of Private School

- The cost of private school makes this prohibitive for most families. If the least expensive are around \$10,000 per student per year, the schools that claim to be Ivy League Prep are over \$30,000 a year.
- As with public school, there is no guarantee of safety.
- And unlike public school, getting students to and from school is the sole responsibility of the parents. Even if you carpool, that can be a lot of hours.

Homeschool

A parent or a tutor educates children at home. Parents, sometimes with government financing, choose the curriculum and take responsibility for the teaching.

PROS of Homeschooling

- You can tailor your education to fit your children. When Kelly's son read fluently at age four, she knew he would have discipline issues in school from sheer boredom. With homeschooling, she was able to allow him to progress at his own pace in different subjects.
- No one cares as much about your children as you do. You're already their best advocate. So even though you may not feel as qualified as a professional educator, if you're ready to learn alongside your children, you have the passion and the ability to teach them well.
- Cost can be a huge pro. For Judy's family, public school was not an option in their area, and private school was too expensive. Homeschooling was a financially reasonable alternative.
- No need to transport children to and from school. (For Judy, in snowy upstate New York, this was a safety issue.)
- A flexible schedule. You—not the school—own your schedule. Both the day (wake up when you choose!) and the year (vacation when you choose!). If you live in a hot climate where you would rather sit inside in the air conditioning, homeschool through the summer months and spend the glorious fall outside. Or maybe you go on "spring break" in February, and avoid peak prices.

CONS of Homeschooling

- The bulk of the work will fall on the homeschooling parent's shoulders. For a season, you may have to sacrifice some of your free time.
- Because of the time requirements to homeschool, many families do not have a full double income. Although some homeschooling parents find it possible to work part-time in real estate, nursing, sales, and so on, most do not work full-time. That loss of a double income can be a huge sacrifice. Worthwhile . . . but a sacrifice.
- Homeschooling requires a commitment from the family. It works best when the parents are in agreement, and when the children comply. Getting to even this starting place can be a struggle.
- And there may be some additional cons in your specific situation. Sports and music may not be easy to pursue outside of the school system. Introverted parents may find it exhausting to be with their children all day long. Family members may be less than encouraging. And so on.

How Do You Make the Decision?

First, this is *your* decision. Don't let it be dictated by someone else, since, whatever you choose, you are the one who will live it on the good days and the bad. On those bad days, it helps to know that you weren't forced into this life against your will.

That said, are any of the three options off the table entirely? If you can eliminate one, you have fewer decisions to make.

If you are down to two choices, look over the pros and cons of each, and add any additional ones specific to your situation. Seeing the pros and cons on paper allows you to see the decision before you more clearly.

Research the answers to any questions that come up. Talk things through with your spouse.

Talk it over with your children. Find out their preferences. Although you'll make the decision

in the end, as the responsible adult, it's good to know what they are thinking.

Pray about it, on your own, and with your spouse. The book of James promises, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." We pray constantly, because we desperately need more wisdom.

And you will get clarity, or clarity enough.

Whatever direction you go this next year, we wish you all the best, and pray God's blessing over you and your family.

And if you think homeschooling may be in your future, we'd be thrilled if you would consider Sonlight.

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The K family Sonlighters,
from Saint Petersburg, FL



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