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HOME-SCHOOLING AND KERA: COMPARISON OF THEMES AND DEVELOPMENT

Dana Patterson

Introduction

Dissatisfaction with the public schools has prompted a growing number of parents to teach their children at home. Despite the fact that public education and home-schooling have a common purpose--to educate our nation's children in the best way possible--the groups are isolated in their efforts. And yet, ironically, by working separately the two have developed many of the same ideas, goals, and methods, although no comparative study of the two has been made until now.

In 1989, in *Rose v. Council for Better Education, Inc.*, Ky 790 S.W.2d 186, the Kentucky Supreme Court declared that the Commonwealth did not have an efficient system of public common schools as guaranteed by Section 183 of the Kentucky Constitution (Harvey 2). At the same time, the Kentucky Supreme Court directed the General Assembly to reestablish education in the state. It said an "efficient system" of common schools that would address curriculum goals" must be built in order to provide an "adequate" education for all children. The recommendations of the Council on School Performance Standards ordered by Governor Wallace G. Wilkinson were used to create the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA), also known as House Bill 940, with its six learning goals and seventy-five "valued outcomes" (The Council iv). The goals include 1)Basic Communication and Math Skills, 2)Core Concepts and Principles, 3)Self-Sufficiency, 4)Responsible Group Membership, 5)Thinking and Problem Solving, and 6)Integrating Knowledge. The outcomes under each goal were renamed "learner outcomes" and eventually "academic expectations." Goals 3 and 4 are included in the Kentucky statute as "learning goals," but

as of the summer of 1994 they are not included in the state's academic assessment program. There are currently fifty-seven learner outcomes, as opposed to the original seventy-five. However, teachers are still urged to include the ideas behind Goals 3 and 4 in their curricula.

More than 830 residents of Kentucky were contacted by the Council on School Performance Standards and asked to express their opinions about what should be expected of the graduates of the year 2000 (The Council on School 3). The Council appropriately reasoned that the themes of KERA should echo the underlying thoughts of the citizens of the state; that is, KERA should provide students with the knowledge and resources to function in our evolving society. Believing that all students can learn at high levels if taught appropriately, the Council developed a means to implement the idea of education reform (Roberts & Kay Inc. 1). As a consulting firm observed,

Some teachers and administrators report changes in the way they view learning, as a result of the performance testing KERA requires. Some say they see learning more now as something children generate, instead of just a demonstration through objective tests of knowledge of facts and ideas that others have generated. (Roberts & Kay, Inc. 6)

A system that is parallel with KERA in its development and themes is the movement of home-schooling. Most people who study home-schooling agree that the numbers have grown dramatically in the last twenty years (Natale 26-27). Sources vary in their specific numbers, but the increase has been in the thousands. Patricia Lines, who

completed research for the U.S. Department of Education in 1992, concluded that the numbers were 250,000 to 350,000, whereas twenty years before they were 10,000 to 15,000 (27).

Home-schooling began to increase significantly around the 1960s and 1970s when the shortcomings of the public education system were pointed out by education reformers (Knowles 195). There is no specific stereotype of these parents, for they are a mix of extreme liberals and conservatives (197). What they do have in common is that they want their students to become responsible, self-sufficient individuals. And interestingly, these parents focus both on affective education as well as academic education, just as KERA does.

Literature Review

Many materials are available on home-schooling. Information on KERA, however, is comparatively scanty because the legislation is still new. The Kentucky Department of Education does send the KERA goals and outcomes to prospective home-school parents, but it informs parents that home-school families are not required to abide by KERA's six goals (Kentucky Dept. of Ed. 7). What, then, do the two have in common? Because there is no source which compares home-schooling and KERA, components of the two must be reviewed simultaneously.

Home-schoolers were some of the first educators to use real-life application in their teachings. A pamphlet on home-schooling by Sam B. Peavey, Ed.D., states that for years a common practice in home-schooling was to spend fewer hours actually working on a subject than putting the knowledge to use in the real world, which was right at the students' fingertips (12-13). He says students from this lifestyle have a much more authentic relationship with the community and its opportunities and demands. After spending just a few short

hours on instruction, the students can devote time to "individual projects, field trips, art, music, libraries, museums, educational television, volunteer work in community agencies, sharing family responsibilities, hobbies," and small money-making jobs such as crafts, gardening, lawn care, etc. (Peavey 13).

Individuals who have been home-school parents or students echo the claims of Peavey. In an article in *The Christian Educator*, Robert B. Farmer, a former home-schooled student, notes the importance of applied knowledge as well as "retained" knowledge in education. His most valuable lesson from home-schooling was that real-life applications rather than memorization made knowledge much easier to retain (Farmer 1). The Colfax family in California home-schooled their four sons, three of whom were accepted at Harvard. The parents allowed the boys to develop their own interests on the farm and pursue them with real-life applications. Most of the boys were interested in biology because of their hands-on experience with its processes in working with the animals (Films for the Humanities and Sciences). Kathleen McCurdy, the Executive Director of the Family Learning Organization in Spokane, WA, in 1988, has said that knowledge "is an organized collection of meaningful facts" that are not memorized from textbooks, but through experience (Hegener 36).

In an interview, Mrs. Stephen Stovall, a home-school parent, has indicated that her daughter learned much more about real-life by being home-schooled: "She [her daughter] was learning so much about life and death and a lot of neat things she could never have learned from a book." Agreeing that there must be books for math and literature, Stovall also claims that her daughter applied knowledge in a much more authentic manner while being home-schooled (Stovall).

The importance of real-life application was also recognized by the creators of KERA. In *Kentuckians' Expectations of Children's Learning: The Significance for Reform*, authors report that some teachers and administrators now view learning in a different way thanks to the use of KERA's performance-testing requirements. Students can learn on their own and create their own meaning. Tests which assess the ability to apply knowledge are given rather than those which include multiple choice, true or false, or matching. (Roberts & Kay, Inc. 6).

In *Kentucky's Learning Goals and Valued Outcomes: Technical Report* examples of the inclusion of real-life application can be found. In writing the original six learning goals, the authors decided the following:

While there was plenty of support for learning basic communication and math skills, the most important learning outcome identified was that students should be able to use their skills and knowledge in mathematics, science, social studies, and other disciplines in situations similar to what they will experience in the real world. (The Council 3)

The contributors said that students should learn to become responsible members of a family, work group, and community as part of their school learning experience (3). Consequently, a subdivision of Goal 2 requires that students demonstrate positive skills in family life and parenting. The contention is that students who are aware of these skills can maintain better relationships with families and groups and are better able to successfully manage their responsibilities as the world and their lives change (The Council 87). Under the science part of Goal 2, real-life application and hands-on experience are required for student understanding and knowledge (48). Since

real-life application is an underlying theme of KERA, the testing procedures echo this philosophy also. The new assessment plan is to move away from the multiple-choice test, which requires teachers to "teach to the test" for the acquisition of knowledge, to a test which has teachers convey the use of knowledge to their students. One example included in KERA is the Kentucky Instructional Results Informational System (KIRIS), which contains performance tasks and open-ended questions. On real-life experiences, the performance tasks are based. Open-ended questions involve the four content areas of mathematics, science, reading, and social studies. More teachers are now beginning to use what is termed a rubric. It is made up of four levels of achievement and the expectations under each level. A teacher assesses a child's product or performance according to these predetermined criteria. The hope in using authentic assessment is to accurately measure the students' abilities to apply knowledge they have learned (132-133).

Another aspect of both home-schooling and the themes underlying KERA is independence of the student. Peavey says that "most home school programs are uniquely designed and conducted with a stress on independent study, individual responsibility, self-evaluation and the use of diverse resources" (Peavey 11). In the case of the Colfax family, independent study was the major component of their home-school. The boys spent their time researching their own topics and reading novels in order to find the answers to their questions. Once the topics moved out of the parents' knowledge base, the boys discovered the material and answers on their own (Films for the Humanities and Sciences). Robert B. Farmer confirms this in his article in *The Christian Educator*. He says that "the nature of the home schooling encourages intellectual independence. This independence led me

[Farmer] to realize the importance of analytical reasoning" (Farmer 1).

Stovall also endorses independent study as being a major component of a home-schooled student's education. Her claim about her daughter is that "it really helped her not be so worried about being different." Peer pressure was not a great part of her daughter's life as in the public school. However, Heather, her daughter, seemed to fit in with her peers quite well (Stovall).

According to an article by Susannah Sheffer in *American School Board Journal* in 1989, home-schooled students can read independently for long periods of time. She also observes that home education provides a good example of how children can "teach" themselves (Sheffer 34). Mark and Helen Hegener emphasize the point that home-schooled children learn the value of continued effort much better than public school children (Hegener 24). John Wesley Taylor from Andrews University has used a self-concept test on a sampling of home-schooled children and conventionally schooled children. His study, primarily done in response to claims that home-schooled children were socially deprived in being required to be more independent, finds that the home-schooled group scores higher than the conventionally schooled group. He concludes that few home-schooled children are socially deprived (Rakestraw 74).

Independence is a major theme of KERA and its goals. In addition to wanting real-life application, the contributors to the writing of KERA believe that "students should develop personal attributes such as self-sufficiency, self-confidence, and adaptability" (The Council 3). Goal 3 is dedicated to such self-sufficiency. When writing the outcome of "Positive Self-Concept," the authors wanted students to recognize their own strengths and use them to shape their own futures (103). If students apply the outcome of "Adaptability and Flexibility," they will be able to adapt on

their own to changing events and ideas (105).

Under the fifth outcome students were to demonstrate self-control and self-discipline. They were also to set realistic goals, manage their own time, and work toward these goals while evaluating their progress by monitoring and accepting responsibility for their own behavior (The Council 107). Another appropriate outcome, number seven, was titled by some as "Independent Learning." The students were encouraged to identify their interests and needs and set learning goals to meet these needs. In addition, this outcome stated that the students were to evaluate their own progress toward these goals based upon internal and external evidence from others (107).

The Council on School Performance Standards claims that "instructional programs that use portfolios as a means for students to present and keep a record of their work enable students to make individual choices about learning to take more responsibility for their own learning" (The Council 138). Although portfolios are not required in a home-school in the state of Kentucky, home-school parents are encouraged to keep one for each child under instruction (Kentucky Dept. of Ed. 2). KERA places high importance on the portfolio, which is soon to be required in every basic subject. According to the writers of KERA, "assessment of writing as a valued outcome requires more than a multiple-choice test of knowledge" (The Council 5). The task is to have students place samples of products or recorded presentations into a student portfolio over a long period of time, while choosing to keep the best for assessment at the end. The main components of the items are writing and reflection (24).

Susannah Sheffer asserts that home-schoolers are pioneers in the use of student portfolios as an evaluation tool. Many parents adopted the method after the National Association of Elementary School

Principals recommended it along with a wide range of assessments for children's progress. The advantage for home-schooling parents was the ability to follow a child's progress over years. (Sheffer 35)

Although not done on a large scale, vertical age grouping is done in both the home and in Kentucky public schools. Susannah Sheffer again argues that home-schoolers are the originators of this idea. In many such families, older and younger children learn from each other and learn to work together (Sheffer 34). Schools have experimented with age grouping in the past by using a couple of years' difference, whereas home-schoolers take it even further by applying parents and much older or younger siblings to this scenario (35).

"Interpersonal Relationships" was a former outcome under Goal 4 which required students to observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors. By doing so, the students were better able to understand self, others, and human relationships. In reaching this outcome, students were to become responsible group members by working with a variety of people (The Council 73).

Another component of KERA with which most people are familiar is the ungraded primary program. In this program, kindergarten through third-grade students work together in a planned atmosphere to learn. The students are not singled out by their ability. Rather, they work together to learn from one another, with each performing jobs he or she is able to do. Multi-age, multi-ability classrooms, as well as continuous progress and positive parental involvement, are the major components of the ungraded primary.

Curriculum, especially integration of subjects, is a similarity between KERA and home-schooling. According to KERA's Goal 1, students should be able to "comprehend, synthesize, and apply information from a variety of sources" (The Council 29). Goal 1 requires students to

apply basic communication and math skills in situations similar to what they will experience in life (3). Teachers, under the new plan of KERA, are to teach by thematic units. This process integrates lessons from each subject area into interesting topics for the students.

In *The Home School Reader*, Mark and Helen Hegener advocate the unit approach to a curriculum. According to home-schoolers Lee and Phil Gonet, it is the most motivating way to get kids interested in learning. For example, the Gonets did a unit on dinosaurs and later found their children playing, using the knowledge they had acquired in their schooling (39-41). The Hegeners claim that having students read all types of material, including recipes, newspapers, and things in which the students are interested, will encourage reading in all topics of instruction (44). In order to incorporate writing, parents are urged to include it in different forms and in all subjects (99-101). The Hegeners also encourage parents to take topics which the children are interested in and then integrate such topics into an overall curriculum (66-69). Stovall, a home-school parent, integrates subjects into a common theme such as the Civil War. She incorporates literature and history in order for the student to get an overall picture of how things were in the time period being studied (Stovall).

Donn Reed, the author of *The Home School Source Book*, writes several pages about structure in a home-school. He agrees with Ten Wade on the statement that "free time and exploring are important," but it is also important to work from a plan and to decide on the basis of goals rather than what seems to be fun at the moment (Reed 35).

Reed explains how reading, writing, spelling, math, history, and cultural diversity can be incorporated and somewhat integrated. Spelling, he says, should not be taught as a distinct skill, but integrated with writing and reading as the kids encounter different words. "Reading, writing, and

spelling (and even talking) are so closely related that trying to separate them is impractical and nearly impossible" (52). Taught as levels, mathematics should also be taught as it applies to real life and to other subjects. Sometimes students learn more in unstructured math (58-59). History also must be approached through different means such as music, gender differences, etc., an approach which in turn teaches cultural diversity integrated with history. In a way, Reed is essentially saying that subjects should be taught in thematic units in order to get the best effect, which is what the same idea is termed in KERA (66).

Whether through real-life application, independent study, portfolios, vertical age grouping, or an integrated curriculum, both KERA and home-schooling maintain similar purposes.

Results

Most sources agree that real-life application is important to the development of knowledge. In using the information he or she has acquired in situations which require analyzing, reasoning, and deciding, a student can develop the ability to apply this information to life. Indeed, people are more satisfied when they make decisions based on knowledge. Because teachers and administrators have learned that objective tests do not accurately measure what a person knows and can do, tests are beginning to move in the direction of performance rather than tests over memorized facts.

The common sense of performance testing and real-life application can be seen. Adults always remember experiences better than facts learned years before in school. Granted, schools and officials like to use results based on research and surveys in order to make decisions. But the idea of real-life application seems not only easy but natural. Real-life application is easier in the home because everyday items and events are immediately on hand. The home-schooled

child can learn how to apply information to situations as a natural part of the school environment.

Independent study also lends itself to implementation in the home-school environment. Not only does it happen naturally, but some home-school parents see independent study as a way for their child to develop his/her own interests and motivation. Another reason would be that in some cases the child sooner or later passes the parent in academic level and has to pursue topics independently. In either case, the situation cultivates an individual who can research and learn without information being handed to him/her by a teacher or parent. An "approach that is flexible, provides a considerable amount of autonomy, and encourages intrinsic motivation in children" fosters an independent student (Williams, Creativity 5). In other words, the student can learn for learning's sake.

Public schools in Kentucky have also taken the step toward more independent study. Educators want students to think on their own and develop ways of solving problems on their own. KERA provides a way for teachers to help students do this. Parts of KERA focus on self-confidence, self-discipline, self-control, self-sufficiency, and adaptability. One section was originally devoted to independent learning. Students learn how to develop their own strengths and to manage their time in order to achieve goals they have set for themselves. Teachers also want students in this atmosphere to learn for learning's sake.

Portfolios can individually provide evidence of independent learning and thinking. The ability to monitor progress over years of study is an advantage the home-school had over public school in the past. A portfolio was established in a home-school simply by keeping the best work a child completed as a record of his/her progress. Over the years the portfolio became more complex and organized. It

became a way for home-school parents to show their child's progress to the public school system. It has also been submitted to universities by home-school parents rather than their child's grades or courses taken through high school (Films for the Humanities and Sciences). Although the home-schoolers pioneered the idea of a portfolio, KERA has sparked its arrival in the public schools.

A portfolio now has a more concise definition and series of expectations attached to it: A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection. (Paulson 60)

KERA puts emphasis on the portfolio, which is soon to be included in every subject. It encourages students to take charge of their own learning by becoming independent, self-directed learners (Paulson 61,63). The portfolio helps students to develop writing skills, integrate subjects, and hone analyzing and decision-making skills. The samples of products placed in a portfolio aid teachers and officials in determining the progress of the child, whether in home-school or public school.

Vertical age grouping naturally happens when students of differing ages are being taught by one person, a situation which is the consequence of home-schooling. Home-schoolers may not be pioneers of the terminology "vertical age grouping" or the idea, as Susannah Sheffer claims (Sheffer 35), but they certainly seem to have made it work. Students in an environment with others who are older or younger seem to learn by modeling or by teaching. These

students also learn how to work together as they will in real-life situations.

Of course, KERA also places an emphasis on interpersonal relationships and understanding others. The idea is that students become responsible community members when they learn to work with a variety of people. "Research documenting the benefits of mixed-age and mixed-ability grouping was a 'driving force' behind the reform legislation in Kentucky," says Linda F. Hagan, an associate commissioner in the Education Department's bureau of instruction (Cohen 1).

The ungraded primary contributes to this idea. *Fortune* magazine has provided a definition in an article on school reform: "Recognizing that children learn at different speeds, the law requires all elementary schools to abolish grades one through three and replace them with classes in which pupils are grouped according to educational progress not age" (Henkoff 139). This definition seems a bit crude, but it provides a skeleton to understanding the ungraded primary. Much more work goes into the program in order to give students the best possible education based on their own progress and abilities, not what everybody else in their age bracket is doing.

Perhaps seeming obvious, home-schooling and KERA have again implemented a common idea, integration of subjects. Some home-school programs have been carried out by organized schedules providing a set time for each subject. More than a few have begun to integrate the subjects. The parents have seen the similarities in language development, reading, and writing and combined the subjects. Some have also combined math and science. Every subject can be combined with another through some avenue. This integration provides students with a way to link ideas and put them to use. When students are allowed to pursue their own

interests, they develop a theme into which they can include aspects of each subject.

KERA has taken the idea of integration of subjects into a theme and developed a plan around it as well. Themes are a way to get students interested in the different subjects and to see how everything can be linked together. KERA requires students to comprehend and synthesize. In order for students to learn these skills, subjects are integrated to start them on their way to higher level thinking.

The two systems seem to have so much in common in their ideas and implementation. One may wonder why the home-schoolers continue to choose home-schooling if their ideas are taking hold in the public schools as well.

Discussion

Information is the key to understanding. Understanding of KERA from the home-schoolers' point of view has not occurred. An article in the September 1994 issue of *Kentucky Living* attempts to examine this problem, emphasizing that the excitement over KERA in the beginning has been transformed into concerns and questions from parents, teachers, and administrators (Luhr 23). Brad Hughes, a spokesman for the Kentucky School Boards Association, has said, "People are confused and in many ways afraid because they don't understand KERA's goals. They don't understand what's going on now and they don't understand where it's supposed to be going" (24). Reasoning for the continuance of home-schooling could be that parents are not aware of what KERA entails. The gaps in the knowledge from a non-educator's standpoint make a difference in the support for KERA (Roberts & Kay, Inc. 6-7).

Parents get alarmed when they don't see the homework coming in that they used to see (Luhr 24). One example of a question is whether the tests used to measure performance are adequate. These as well as

other components of KERA are new and different. Hughes insists, "We spend far too much time worrying about what the news media broadcasts and prints and far too little time worrying about what children are telling their parents" (24). This change and uncertainty leaves parents who want to be involved with their children's education frustrated.

Several sources reveal reasons why parents, not considering real-life application, independent study, portfolios, vertical age grouping, or an integrated curriculum, choose home-schooling. The first, a paper by Lawrence T. Williams, *Home Schooling: A Review of Research*, focuses upon a study by Mayberry in Oregon, who found the following four distinct types of home-schoolers: Socio-relational, Academic, Religious, and New Age (Williams 8-9).

The Socio-relational group is mostly concerned with the environment in which children's education is conducted. Parental involvement is a major component of their thinking. Some parents want involvement and complete knowledge of their children's lives. Immediately, one might think that all home-school parents are fundamental Christians who do not want "false" beliefs taught to their children. This certainly is not true. Of course, there is a lack of documentation and objective evaluation in home-schooling, which worries officials and state legislatures (Rakestraw 72). From reading the available literature, one ascertains that there is plenty of information generated from both sides of the issue.

In "Outlaw Generation: A Legal Analysis of the Home-Instruction Movement," the author states, "Dissatisfied, frustrated, and disillusioned with today's schooling, these parents feel powerless to influence or improve what they perceive to be chaotic, state-controlled education" (Harris 26). Including what several sources say, there are many reasons why parents choose home-

schooling. Each one is personal to the parent.

The second category of home-schoolers, termed Academic, is defined as those who are concerned primarily with the academic achievement of their children. Many home-schoolers claim that some of the most prominent people from history were home-schooled, so it is good enough for their children. Wolfgang Mozart, Thomas Edison, Leo Tolstoy, and Abraham Lincoln were educated at home (Seuffert 70-71). Some of these did not have superior abilities, but home-schoolers hold that instruction at home causes a person to advance more quickly (71). Rakestraw's article shows several studies where home-schooled children have achieved higher than national averages on standardized tests (Rakestraw 73). Of course, educators are now dealing with performance testing, which is totally different.

The Religious heading describes the third group of Mayberry's home-schooling parents as those who are primarily motivated to home school as a result of religious beliefs and values. The fourth group, New Age, is somewhat like the Religious. It is made up of parents who have a desire for an alternative orientation to their children's education, relating to the parents' personal beliefs. Jane A. VanGalen published a study in 1987 which found four general reasons for choosing home-schooling which relate to religious or personal beliefs. The first is parental belief in strengthening the family. The second, to protect their children from the influence of others who hold values and beliefs different than their own, is echoed by Rakestraw's findings. Rakestraw said that some parents do not want their children in public schools, particularly for the reason of socialization. They fear negative peer influence (Rakestraw 74). In other words, they are worried about the quality of socialization. VanGalen's third reason is children are believed by parents to have

unique needs that are not met in the classroom. Parents also believe number four: since they know their child best, they will be able to provide a more appropriate education (VanGalen 163-164).

Ed Nagel, coordinator of the National Association for the Legal Support of Alternative Schools, says it is the natural responsibility of the parents to educate their children. He says they are "fully cognizant of their child's needs and are fully qualified to integrate a series of programmed learning materials with their own family's values and practices (Harris 27). VanGalen concludes that home-schoolers are devoted to their ideas so that even "modifying" the public school curriculum to include their perspectives and values would not attract these parents back (VanGalen 176).

Several home-schooling researchers have developed a somewhat artificial group division of home-schooling parents. Two groups have emerged in this attempt to understand home-schooling, the ideologues and the pedagogues. The terms were first used by Jane A. VanGalen in 1986 during her research of home-schooling (Knowles 196-197). They were later expanded by the other researchers.

The ideologues are described as a religious group unhappy with what they see as the public school's "secular humanist" curriculum (Avner 30-31). In this group, families are often concerned with the breakdown of the family unit (Mayberry 210). Some families teach at home because they feel it is their responsibility given to them by God, just like feeding their children (Mayberry 216). Another component of religious aspects is the New Age movement. Some followers see home-schooling as a way to further this movement, to accept and love all things (216). Other researchers explain ideologues as parents who use the same activities of a public school simply transferred to the home environment with the exclusion of those elements that are

undesirable (Knowles 196). A study by Gustafson indicates that 34% of the home-schooled families surveyed "had no religious affiliation at all, and of the 66% who indicated an affiliation, only 13% considered themselves to be fundamentalist Christians" (Williams, *Research* 7). The majority of home-schoolers may fall into the next category.

Viewing their children as unique individuals, pedagogues fear that they are not recognized in the same way by the public schools (Mayberry 217). Avner describes the pedagogues as having "deep misgivings about the quality of education in formal school settings" (Avner 30-31). The parents see the children as objects in a large class with a rigid curricula. In a family labeled as pedagogues, there is a greater emphasis on intrinsic motivation; stated differently,

These families tend to place the learner central to everything else that transpires in the home with the belief that 'schooling' does not automatically ensure an "education." (Knowles 196-197)

Mrs. Stephen Stovall, an interviewed home-schooled parent, does not see herself as fitting into any one of these categories. She states reasons from every category. Her religious convictions and values lead her to think that home-schooling is the only alternative for her growing son. In addition, Stovall loves spending time with her children and watching them mature academically. She also enjoys learning along with them. "Not that it was always rosy," she observes; "it is just like teaching school; you have your good days and your bad days. We are all people and we all have problems. We really learned to love each other through those things" (Stovall). (See Appendix A for more information about Stovall's convictions.)

While schools need to understand the parents' point of view, parents need to understand the processes involved in the public school system. First, teachers must be trained in talking and explaining to parents the processes of KERA. Perhaps when parents understand what their child will be learning in school, home-school parents will be more willing to involve their children in such a curriculum and philosophy. Robert Sexton, executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, advises that having teachers sit down with parents and explain what they are doing could dispel a huge amount of the apprehension parents might have about KERA (Luhr 24). The time it takes to do such a thing is frustrating to teachers, but parents need to know what and why the school is doing things. Claiming that the children's welfare comes first, home-schooling parents and the public school system could work together to provide more opportunities for furthering the children's welfare.

Conclusion

Home-schoolers do not want to be viewed with skepticism or ill will, but rather with interest and shared spirit (Sheffer 35). Neither do the public schools want to be viewed with ill will and distrust. Many public school advocates take a bristly attitude toward home-schoolers. "They perceive home schoolers' actions as the ultimate slap in the face for public education and a damaging move for the children" (Natale 26). Nonetheless, one can only see that the home-schooling parents have the welfare of their children in mind. If the welfare of children is the only argument that the school system has, then it needs to be doing far more persuasion of home-schoolers. Doing just what the public school wants, home-schooling parents are thinking of their children's welfare first.

"Responsible parties in both the public and the private sectors have recognized how hostile attitudes can undermine broader social goals, and some have taken steps to overcome this" (Lines 516). Patricia M. Lines feels "the greater burden of building bridges should fall on public officials, because they are the professionals in the partnership" (Lines 517). Meetings should focus on things such as the goals for the children. Some groups have come closer to tolerance and, in some places, cooperation (Natale 26). Complete cooperation being some time away, KERA advocates and home-schoolers must focus on one common theme among the many small ones: the students and the best possible education for them.

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