

## When Home Schoolers Go to School: A Partnership Between Families and Schools

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Several years ago, as I was approaching the Maywood Center, a public school facility operated by the Highline Public School District in Seatac, Washington, an odd and contradictory sign pointed the way. It announced, "Homeschooling Program, North Entrance." The sign was a symbol of new partnerships between public school professionals and home schooling parents. This article offers a preliminary examination of public programs like this one. These are programs that accept parents as the child's primary teacher.

There are a number of such programs throughout the country now. California may have the largest number. There, the state's charter school law has encouraged their development. About 10% of California's more than 100 charter schools cater to students who do most of their learning off-campus. To be sure, such programs existed before California adopted charter school legislation. California's compulsory education law recognizes enrollment in a public school's independent study program as a way

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to educate a child at home. As a result, a number of districts—the largest being San Diego—started actively recruiting home schooling children, enticing them with free curricular supplies and services from the district and, in some cases, a voucher for additional materials. These districts then include the children enrolled when calculating state per pupil assistance.

Public educators also have jumped into these uncharted waters (no pun intended) in other states. A program in Des Moines, Iowa, has been operating successfully for many years (Dahm, 1996). Alaska founded the grandfather of public programs for home schoolers with its correspondence school—now known as its distance learning school—in Juneau. The Alaska program started decades ago to serve children in isolated areas, but today well more than half its enrollment live in the Anchorage area. Recent surveys in Texas (Yeager, 1999) and Minnesota (Ricke, 1999) indicate that some public schools in those states are also offering at least limited support to home schoolers.

This article describes two different types of programs in eastern Washington state. In one, parents are independently home schooling, taking responsibility for curriculum and evaluation of student progress. They may enroll the child part-time in specific activities or classes, and they may consult with school faculty, borrow district texts and materials, and obtain testing services from the local public school system. However, they retain control, and the district may count only a part of the child's time. These parents file a declaration of intent to home school.

The other program is a home schooling "look alike." It is called public school "independent study" in California, and there the state department of education carefully distinguishes it from home schooling. In Washington state, the usage increasingly favors "parent-partnered" public education for this option. In both California's independent study and Washington's parent-partnered option, the public school sets the curriculum, at least theoretically. The school decides when and how to evaluate the child's progress and what tests to use. Most of the work takes place under a parent's supervision, but overall direction is with the school. In Washington state, there is a minimum amount of time required on campus for younger children. In Washington state, parents must revoke their declaration of intent to home school. There is nonetheless some confusion between home schooling and the independent study and parent-partnered programs. Those who enroll in these full-time programs often consider themselves home schoolers, and the faculty working with them often call them home schoolers. California charter schools, for example, sometimes announce a program of home schooling when they intend to follow the state law for independent study (and they intend to claim 100% Full Time Equivalent, or FTE, in state support for each child). If the public school fac-

ulty are sensitive to the parents' desires, there may be little difference between an independent study or part-time program for home schoolers.

These programs, whether home schooling or independent study, are, in the jargon of public school reform efforts, site-based managed programs, schools of choice, schools within schools, and schools that make parental involvement a key component. In both types of programs, much of the work takes place off-campus under the general supervision of a parent.

Until recently, there has been virtually nothing in the popular or the scholarly literature on such programs. There seems to be very little awareness, outside their immediate spheres, that they exist. The home schooling community is aware of them, of course. Indeed, many home schoolers greet these public efforts with extreme suspicion: At one center I found a pamphlet by an organization called the Inland Empire Home School Center, which advocated home schooling and argued that public school centers for home schoolers are a "Trojan Horse," through which public educators gain control over the child's education. Loss of a religious orientation in the program is also a serious issue to many home schoolers (Home School Legal Defense Association, 1998).

The most intensive survey of home schoolers' attitudes toward these public programs, based on a sample of home schooling families affiliated with the Texas Home School Coalition, a Christian organization, revealed some interest in using relatively neutral public school resources. The most attractive offering would be an opportunity to participate in group activity such as band or choir, with 49% of respondents saying they agreed<sup>1</sup> that they needed or would like to have access to such a resource. Respondents also were interested in part-time enrollment in courses (41%) and use of a public school library (36%). Except for use of the library, there was a greater preference for using these same resources at a private school. For every resource, there were more respondents who indicated antipathy to using these public school resources (indicating they disagreed that they needed such a resource). Most of the distributions were bimodal; the middle category of "undecided" usually claimed the smallest proportion of respondents (Yeager, 1999, Tables 39, 68, 69).

In Yeager's (1999) survey, home schoolers rejected the use of public school teachers for counseling on effective teaching (87% indicating that they disagreed with the statement that they needed or would like to use such service), use of public school counselors (85% disinclined), health screening (79% disinclined), and psychological services (92% disinclined). In contrast, there was greater interest in using such services at private

<sup>1</sup>The term *agree* or *disagree* includes those who said "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree" on the survey.

schools, although even there a majority of parents were disinclined to use the services (Yeager, 1999).

The use of a computer lab was not specifically covered in the Yeager survey, but it is popular among public school programs in Washington state. On a survey, this probably would rank in popularity at least with part-time enrollment in public school courses, and because of the family control over choice among many software offerings, it could be more popular.

As noted, many home schoolers are suspicious of such programs. Many public educators and the families who send their children full-time to public schools also often look askance at these programs. "It's not fair," complained one public school parent, "for them to want the best of what the public school has to offer without paying the dues" (Hawkins, 1996). In Yeager's survey, a majority of Texas public school superintendents indicated indifference to home schooling. Even so, most had a fair picture of home schooling: A large majority (65%) thought lack of religious integration was a large motivating factor, and a majority also named "curriculum incompatible with beliefs," "negative peer socialization" and "safety decline" (Yeager, 1999, p. 94) as reasons for home schooling. These superintendents were correctly reflecting home schoolers' frequently cited reasons for their decision. Yeager also uncovered hostile unstructured responses from a tiny minority of responding superintendents who claimed that home schoolers were "idiots," "dropouts," "unable to cope" with public school, or "exploiting" their children for free farm labor. For most superintendents, the issue is probably simply a fiscal one. The Minnesota survey revealed that about 70% of superintendents were ready to consider changes in the state funding formula to allow home school involvement in the public program (Ricke, 1999, p. 40). Where state seat-time requirements are lax, it is even possible for a home schooling program to turn into a "cash cow" (as one administrator put it) for the district. A superintendent (from another state) once told me that he built a new school building for his very low-income predominantly minority students with "profits" reaped from a distance learning program the district offered to home schoolers throughout his state.

Even if a majority of home schoolers stay away, these school-parent partnerships can be made viable. The school must have an attractive program and be sensitive to the parents' hopes and wishes for their child. There must be a large enough home schooling population that the school can afford to make at least one teacher available to the program. Put the two together, and interesting educational experiments emerge.

This article provides a descriptive analysis of 11 public school districts offering programs for parent-partnered (or independent public school study) and part-time programs for home schoolers and examines how they

changed over 4 years. These were the universe of such programs operating by the school year 1994–1995 in eastern Washington state. Observations are based on one or more site visits in either spring 1994 or 1995 and a follow-up telephone interview in spring or fall 1999. The analysis discusses features common to programs that remained stable over time and how families interact with other families in their host school, where there is one.

Before these programs emerged, eastern Washington state had a relatively large and active home schooling population. There, one can find families in their third generation of home schooling. On the other hand, in the 1980s the state seemed a poor candidate for the flowering of a partnership between public schools and home schoolers. Home schooling at that time violated the state's compulsory education law. However, the state also had a strong tradition of local control, and, in the more neighborly communities of the state, home schooling had won acceptance even though the law disallowed it. During that early era, for example, a group of local prosecutors in a joint press conference announced that they would not prosecute home schooling parents, as they had their hands full with real criminals. Likewise, a number of public school superintendents offered enrollment to local home schoolers, allowing children to enroll in independent study and sheltering their parents from prosecution.

Finally, the Washington legislature revised its laws to allow home schooling. The legislature also required local districts to admit home schoolers to courses on a part-time basis. The legal environment went immediately from difficult to one of the most friendly environments for home schoolers. In addition, Washington state law allowed interdistrict transfers, with state funds following the pupil. State per-pupil support is relatively generous (Gold, Smith, Lawton, & Hyary, 1992). In addition, the new law provided \$300 per pupil for ancillary services such as testing. (State law requires that home schooling students undergo periodic testing, although results are not sent to the state education agency.) This and the state support for part-time enrolled students was a small incentive to offer programs to attract otherwise unenrolled students within and outside the district. In 1994–1995, the state changed its alternative education law to allow students to be full-time enrolled while remaining off-campus much of the time. This provided an even bigger incentive to districts to enroll home-based students full-time to earn 100% FTE for each.

It was just as the law was changing that I visited the 11 programs for the first time. Each was unique. Fully half the programs had a primary or exclusive focus on computer-assisted instruction in a computer lab, usually with some computer courses and with support services from a professional. However, most of these also offered field trips and some additional instruction, and those that did not were moving toward greater diversifi-

cation. Most of the programs were started by enthusiastic teachers working with a handful of home schooling leaders. In the smaller number of cases, although computer-assisted instruction or parent training was available, the programs focused more on subject-area offerings.

I observed the actual teaching in most of the centers that offered courses. All were good, and all enjoyed attentive pupils. Some were outstanding. One outstanding example, which was short-lived, pivoted around a charismatic teacher who had originated the program. The other, in another district, depended on an equally talented teacher who applied when the district decided to have a program and advertised for a candidate.

### The Seventh Planet

In the first case, Forest Adams had once been the principal of an alternative school in the eastern United States, chosen, as he claims, not because of his education credentials, but because the district saw him, an educated African American man, as a role model for the children at the school. When the building burned and the district determined not to replace it, Adams migrated West. There, he earned a living as a management consultant, settling into a picturesque middle-class, mostly White suburban area nestled in the foothills of the Snoqualmie Mountains. Observing a substantial home schooling population, Adams decided to combine his interest in education and consulting. He developed and offered a unique program of science instruction to home schooling children. He called it the Seventh Planet, and he challenged elementary-age children to determine how to populate a seventh planet. He required each student to devise experiments to acquire knowledge on how to move a colony through space and establish it in a hostile terrain. This private operation, located in a storefront, charged \$100 per child per month.

Adams's private program went public in 1993 when the assistant superintendent of the Lake Washington School District noticed a gaggle of school-age children entering a nearby storefront during school hours. Curious and concerned, he followed them and so discovered the Seventh Planet. This was a tense moment. Chances are often high that local public school officials might be hostile and try to close down such a program. But this official was not hostile. To the contrary, he was impressed. He asked if he could return with the district's elementary school principals. The full retinue of principals who visited were likewise impressed. Thom Dramer, the principal of Samantha Smith Elementary School, had brought along a sixth-grade teacher whose judgment he valued. Both liked what they saw. Before they left, they learned that Adams's lease was running out, and they offered to Adams a temporary classroom—and a deal. The school would

pay Adams the state FTE less 5% for administrative costs. Adams also charged the family a lab fee of \$24 per month.

As a public program, the Seventh Planet enrolled three groups of children, each group meeting once per week for 5 hours. In addition to group projects, each child worked on an experiment that would further the knowledge that could allow colonizing a distant planet. Each child was to identify his or her own project. The rules were: First, the child, not the teacher, must choose the project; second, the child must finish the project; third, the project must work; and fourth, the student must present findings to a jury of peers who would grade it for clarity. The grading criteria required an explanation of the steps involved in reaching the goal, explanation of concepts, making eye contact, and use of clear graphics and other presentation aids. The student who did not receive better than a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5 had to revise and present the project again.

During the site visit in spring 1994, I met a young girl, age 9, who had designed an experiment to determine the effect of temperature on hatching chicks to understand the extent to which the space ship and the new colony would require temperature control for chickens to be transplanted. She had identified a list of control variables, including genetic selection (the eggs were to come from the same batch of hens and be randomly assigned to a control and an experimental group), hen's feed and water, and chick's feed and water. The temperature would vary for the experimental group, and she would record the hatching dates, weight, and other development of the chicks. This was only the second time I had met a child this young who understood what a control variable was. (The first time also involved an out-of-school experience in an after-school activity.) A young boy, about the same age, was building and shooting rockets into the air and taking temperature readings under varied conditions. Although enthusiastic and successful at rocket-building and launching, he was not able to indicate quite what he expected to discover.

The Samantha Smith School was considering ways it could expand the program for its full-time children in the regular classroom setting. But for personal reasons, Adams left the program. The district had no way to replicate his unique approach and this unique arrangement. It was clearly personality driven. The program had offered a valuable part-time experience for home schoolers while it was in operation.

### South Whidbey School District

South Whidbey Island is about 1½ hours from Seattle by car and ferry. The largest town is Langley, home to perhaps 800 people, with summer

tourists doubling the population. Elizabeth Itaya runs the Wellington Day School, a preschool and child care establishment. As a member of the district's Strategic Planning Board, a part of a statewide restructuring effort, she proposed that the district provide services to home schooling families. Itaya hoped only for vision and hearing screening. In December 1992, the school board approved Policy No. 2115, recognizing home schooling "as a valid instructional option for children" and encouraging home schoolers to enroll in academic, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities in the district on a part-time basis and to take advantage of district testing and other services. In July 1993, the district posted a notice of vacancy for a new position—the "off campus/home school extension program coordinator." Nancy Thompson was the successful candidate in a field of 25 applicants. She had the required state certificate for teaching K through Grade 12, the desired flexibility, and a willingness to collaborate with students and parents from a wide variety of backgrounds.

In spring 1994, I observed Thompson deliver a class on health. The Wellington Day School donated the classroom space. Some of the children who had just attended a computer lab at a nearby public school rode to the site with Thompson. More children arrived with their mothers, some of whom left and some of whom stayed. All told, there were 15 children and a toddler, the younger sibling of a participating child. The mother amused the toddler with toys in one corner while four other mothers participated in the class session.

Thompson had a challenge: The age range of the children in the room, excluding the toddler, was from 6 to 16. She began with questions about parts of the body. The brightest answers came from a precocious younger girl. Thompson asked what the body needed to be healthy. Older children mentioned food, water, and shelter. The younger girl added exercise and sleep. Thompson asked what kinds of foods are good for the body. A discussion of minerals, vitamins, and food allergies followed. Then Thompson asked the children, "What's inside your body?" Several organs were named, and Thompson was ready to focus on the heart. She passed around a bottle containing a pig's heart in formaldehyde, with a word of caution and a comment about the carcinogenic effects of formaldehyde. All the children, regardless of age, were interested in the pig's heart ("cool!").

Thompson talked about the heart, how it beats and rests between beats, and then asked all the children to trace the outline of their body on a large sheet of paper, mothers and older children helping younger children where needed. She instructed the children to color and cut out the heart, and paste it in the right location on the outline of his or her body. After the session Thompson distributed kits with pictures of human organs, along with text about each organ's function. The children went home with the

kits and with directions to complete all the organs. Older children received additional and more advanced material. Thompson lamented later that she should have thought to require parental attendance at this particular class, as the mothers who did attend would be better equipped to help the child complete the course. She did not seem to realize what a magnificent job she had done in captivating a room of children of all ages.

In addition to developing and delivering a fine one-room schoolhouse learning experience, Thompson provided, and still provides, assistance to parents in finding curricular materials and designing their home program. She spends 1 to 2 hours with each, advising them on materials, going through catalogs, discussing how the older child can get high school credit, and so forth. She often can provide free materials—samples from publishers sent to the district. In addition, the district offers up to \$100 in materials to the family. Some children dropped out of the program when their families acquired computers. Observing that some of her families are low-income and cannot afford computers, Thompson remarked, “I feel more than I ever have in my teaching that I am helping people.”

## Partnership in Education (II)

When I called the Partnership in Education (II; or PI) program in Chimacum, Washington, explaining that I was visiting public school programs for home schoolers, Kit Pennell admonished, “We have nothing to do with home schooling. We’re public! Public! Public!” One of the teachers, Marci VanCleve, started a predecessor program, the Chimacum Studies Program, for home schoolers, in the school year 1984–1985. Originally, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (the OSPI) had funded the off-campus program easily. However, in 1992–1993, the OSPI became more rigorous about demanding seat time as a condition to receiving state foundation aid. Since then, Chimacum has considered its program a full-time alternative program, with a strong parent component. VanCleve calls it a “33–33–33 student–parent–teacher partnership.” Under the classification used in this article, it is a public school independent study program.

As a public school teacher, VanCleve had become concerned that seat time seemed ineffective, at least for some students. She felt many students needed more individualized attention. She recognized that “a kid can sit at home at a computer and have the world at his or her fingertips.” However, she quickly added that this was now an off-campus program. “We are not home-based. Students use the Chimacum curriculum, materials, and so forth.” This is, then, exclusively an independent study program, although

the teachers are so sensitive to the individual wishes of families that there will appear to be little difference between this and part-time home schooling, from the family point of view. The district tends to treat the program as an intervention rather than an option for families, although the families often tend to see it in another light.

The program kicks off each year with a potluck. Throughout the year, there are parent conferences of ½ to 1 hour each week for each child. A parent who feels that this is unnecessary may reduce that time and use a report form on the child's program. The program offers 4-hour classes aimed at various cultural learning, including research on the art, foods, and games of different cultures. Some of the formal classes are offered every other year. In 1997–1998, there was some thought about abandoning the individual services to families, but about 100 families indicated that they wished to keep them.

At the time of the site visit (spring 1995), there were four teachers, mostly part time, at 2.6 FTEs. The program shared an administrator busy with other programs, leaving the teachers to do almost all the planning, developing, scheduling, evaluating, and training. The program enrolled 67 K–12 students (full-time). In addition, the program served one English-as-a-second-language student (who was Russian) and four special education students attending the adjacent elementary school, and one part-time and one home-schooled student. The last two received no conference time or record keeping. They could attend as long as there was room in a class. The teachers also tutored a number of at-risk children who were regularly enrolled.

The program for the day of the site visit involved training parents for their role in the education of kindergartners and first graders. Four mothers and five small children arrived about 9:00 a.m. One mother had questions before they started about placement at a private school. One of the teachers advised her to be cautious. "You can get lost over there ... all ages ... big kids ... It's a little scary." She advised the parent to write down what she wanted for her child, and to remember that certain approaches work best in classrooms with children of varied abilities and school officials usually want to maintain that balance.

The parent training sprang from one of the teacher's weekend training sessions and focused on child-led education. Topics ranged from the attention span of a small child for structured learning (not more than 1 hr) to letter formation and writing. The children nearby worked with computers or made play-dough sculptures. One small girl left her activity to sit on her mother's lap and diverted her mother's attention. Although the teacher tried to persuade her to return to the activity, the child remained. Another girl also appeared, but she made no effort to distract her mother.

Students tend to stay in the program for about 2 years. Some students go back to the campus school; some go to home schooling. They believe that

part-time school and part-time in the PI Program does not work well for elementary school students because of “conflict with the classroom teacher.” Evidence of success is anecdotal. The teachers believe that the program serves children who do not fit into a regular classroom on campus, including those operating at very low and very high achievement levels. It’s an “eccentric population” of “those that can’t settle into a campus.” VanCleve remarked, “Joey Johnson [not his real name] would fail in five minutes on campus.” Wester added that “60 to 90% of our children won’t respond to the methods you are supposed to use on campus.”

The teachers talked about their experience in positive terms. Nita Wester remarked, “I can’t go back to a regular classroom. I would be too worried about being ineffective.” She subscribes to Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and talks about how the program allows development for different children. VanCleve added, “You have to be dedicated to it. It’s a unique philosophy.” She talked about the ideas of W. Edward Deming and William Glasser’s transference of these ideas to schools. “Boss management doesn’t work.” Schools must be responsive to customers; individualized program leads to success, not efficiency. Wester, who has a contract for 80% of her time, believes she is working about 60 hours a week:

We’re doing this because we are all committed educators. I’m striving to change the education structure. The faster we have some options and a practical working model, the better it is. Money is a big program. We don’t value kids in our society.

VanCleve also noted that in regular classes, “teachers become defensive; they cling to old ways; they are afraid of change; they have low self-esteem.” Finally, to the extent that the program attracts hard-to-teach children, it can ease the task of the regular classroom teacher.

The program had not changed much by 1998–1999. There were five part-time teachers, for 2.8 FTE on the faculty, and 63 students in Grades 1 to 12. VanCleve and Wester are still there. The emphasis has remained family-centered, with a conscious effort to provide child-directed education, following the ideas of John Holt, an early writer and advocate of home schooling. VanCleve is now also interested in the ideas of Stephen Covey and considering how they might be applied to the program.

### Bainbridge Island School District Options Program

In 1992, David Guterson, the novelist, was an English teacher at the Bainbridge Island High School, an author of a popular book on home

schooling, and a home schooling parent. He joined forces with an assistant superintendent, and together they planned a program in summer 1992. By fall, the district created its new Options Program, providing only an empty room and a newly hired coordinator, Marilyn Place, who had a K-8 certificate. Place worked on a flexible, part-time basis; students enrolled part-time and participated for an agreed-on number of hours per week, on a flexible schedule. By spring 1995, 38 children were enrolled, ages 6 to 13, in Grades 1 to 8. This represented more than a third of the 107 home-schooled children registered in the district at the time. Place believed compliance with the filing law was good and that she did in fact serve about one third of the district's home schoolers.

There is one program for the K-3 contingent and another for the older group. There are courses in writing and art, and a book and drama club. The center offers a room with materials where parents may work with their own children. The center plans field trips twice a month to such places as a children's museum, art museums, and so forth. A number of families who have not enrolled their children come in for ancillary services, including consulting, use of facilities, and assessment. A parent steering committee, originally meeting monthly, meets three times a year. Parents also volunteer to help with the program.

On the day of the site visit in spring 1995, the older group was meeting to learn about stream quality and was starting a project to help the county measure quality in its streams. In attendance were two fathers, seven mothers, an interested property owner, 15 children in the 7- to 9-year age range, one child age 12, and one child age 6. The session began with more or less conventional classroom instruction. A county ecologist specializing in community education passed around preserved stream insects, explaining their life cycle and habitat. With another teacher, she told two children's stories, which incidentally related to the lesson involving the condition of streams and wetlands. One was the story of a crayfish, who strayed too far from the water and whose eyes dried out. Blind, the crayfish found his way back by identifying the trees he bumped into: When he found an alder he knew he was near water, and when he found a willow he knew he was on the water's edge. The ecology expert also showed a short video on insects in streams, discussing signs of a healthy stream, what to look for, and how to do a water survey.

The group then left in private vehicles for a stream nearby, where they took two samples, following instructions. Some of the boys tended to stray, chasing each other around the field. All of the children, including the boys, gathered around when the ecology expert summarized the findings from the first stream sample. Most of the children were attentive to the procedures and helped out. The work consisted of dredging the bottom

and sifting through the mud on screens for insects, placing the insects in containers, and classifying and counting them. The first stream sample was accomplished with much adult work. The second was almost exclusively managed by the children. Students and parents planned to continue gathering samples for a year, at different sites, conveying results via modem to a city computer that would track stream quality for the island.

By 1998–1999, the number of children participating in the Options program had grown from about 40 to about 80, about half of whom were receiving only ancillary services such as testing. The other half accounted for five FTEs, with each child spending only about 2 to 4 hours on site. After some talk of expansion, most of the participants urged the district to keep it small. This means that there would be, at the most, two FTE teaching faculty, including Place and two other part-time faculty, and a secretary. Plans are to offer more multiage classroom opportunities and to mandate parental involvement. The program allows high school students to obtain a degree from the Bainbridge Island High School. The center plans to move to a new location, as the district's building program makes space available. The decision to keep the program small means that there is usually a waiting list.

### Parent Assisted Learning Services

The Tacoma School District, third largest in the state, at the outset of the study offered a program, Parent Assisted Learning Services (PALS), for children in Grades 1 to 8. PALS had focused on counseling parents and considered the children to be full-time enrolled. Ninety percent of the students in the program previously had attended a regular public school setting and had been floundering. School counselors steered these children into the program because of their specific needs. Since its inception in January 1990 until the time of the visit in spring 1994, the program had enrolled approximately 40 students, of which about 20 were currently active, from among more than 300 home schoolers registered with the school district aged 8 and older. The Instructional Resource Lab is open from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The program also offered testing for children in Grades 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11 (the testing sequence for public school students). The teacher provided parents with a copy of the learning objectives for Grades 1 to 8 as well as the tests reflecting these objectives. The lab had eight computer stations in a large and pleasant room, conference tables, and a few books.

Parents would begin with a conference with the PALS teacher and continue to meet weekly between 9:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through

Friday, with the teacher to plan instruction. The parents also could borrow textbooks and workbooks (regularly adopted materials for Tacoma School District). The teacher maintained a portfolio for each child. The teacher, who was in her first year and was African American, talked about the African American home schooling parents. They recently developed their own support group, having found that the nearby White groups were heavily involved either in a religious or philosophical orientation that did not appeal to them. This teacher's supervisor, in contrast, expressed some disapproval of home schooling. "It is an intellectual isolationism. One of the reasons the parents take their kids out of school is because they don't want them exposed to their peer groups or their teacher." The program was offering the kinds of services that Yeager's study suggests interest home schoolers the least (Yeager, 1999). Over time, the program transformed completely, moved to another facility, changed its name to the Alternative Learning Center, and became available for high school students only. This new program enrolled only full-time students in school-supervised independent study, with 170 enrollees as of fall 1999.

### The Maywood Center and Successors

The remainder of the programs visited initially pivoted around a computer lab, often with field trips and other classes added on the side. The largest of these at the time of the site visits was the Maywood Center. It began in 1987 as a technology center offering computer-aided instruction and services to students at risk of dropping out. The Center began as a project of the Highline Foundation, a local nonprofit organization formed to support the public schools, with grants from the Control Data Corporation and the Boeing Company. At the prompting of the district superintendent, in January 1991 the Maywood Center opened its doors to home schoolers, accepting a handful of home schooling children on a pilot basis. Despite the lack of publicity, applications came flooding in, prompting the center to close its doors to new enrollees temporarily. With 200 applicants on a waiting list, the district had to rewire the center, which had insufficient power to support the computer network housed there.

By the 1993–1994 school year, the Maywood Center was serving more than 500 students. Approximately 300 were part-time home schoolers; another 100 students had dropped out of high school and were preparing for the General Educational Development (GED) test; about 110 students had transferred recently into the district and needed an interim program because their new classroom has progressed too far into the semester. Finally, about 40 high school seniors, a few credits shy of that needed for

graduation, were taking up to 1.5 credits after school hours to fill the gap. Maywood required all seniors to enroll at a public high school.

In addition to access to computer hardware and software, the Center offered early childhood programs and assistance to secondary students in making the transition from school to career training, work, or college. It provided advice and information on scholarships for these students. The center was a registered site for GED testing, which took place at least monthly. It had a state-of-the-art computer lab, with two large interconnected file servers, each capable of handling five CD-ROMs. One server managed the PLATO 2000 Integrated Learning System, a sequenced Grade 3 to 12 instructional program in mathematics, language arts, social studies, science, computer technology, and career information. The other managed computer stations available for use of other computer instruction programs for K through Grade 12. There was a library of more than 200 commercial programs, which was growing, and 9,000 titles in the public domain. The center tested Microsoft educational programs before their release to the general public and so obtained some software free of charge. There were 60 workstations, and 50 used computers purchased from a Boeing surplus sale waiting to be upgraded. The center had a full-time teacher, certified for K through Grade 12, and a computer specialist. The computer specialist was then the official manager of the homeschool program, as well as the person who would install the new chips in the 50 second-hand Boeing computers and assist students at their stations. The center offered workshops on such things as the use of Microsoft Windows, Write, Terminal, Notebook, Works, Word, Publish, and other programs; search tools; and how to use the National Science Foundation's Internet electronic resources. Like several other of the programs described, the Maywood Center required parents to remain with their children while at the center. By the winter of 1992–1993, the center remained open 8 hours daily, including Saturday and Tuesday evening. Home schoolers were requesting more evening hours.

In summer 1997, the Maywood Center closed. The Highline Foundation changed its name to the Foundation for Education Choice and determined to leave Highline and start a new center in nearby Kent. The plan became one of starting such a center every year in a different location and leaving the old center to be operated by the district where it was located. The first full-time teacher at the old center, Marcus Watkins, took over the new center, which was renamed the Manhattan Homeschool Center and relocated to the Manhattan School. (The original building was found unsafe for children.) The new building offered more spacious rooms. Watkins, reporting to a busy principal in another building, found that he had virtual direction of the program. Although the number of home schoolers dropped (a large

number migrated to the new Kent Learning Center), he established a similar program in the new building. It has a preschool corner for younger siblings, about 20 computer stations, and two pleasant and spacious classrooms. The Manhattan School continued the home schooling component but not the other components of the old Maywood Center. It also added a small on-site school for children who were enrolled full-time. The two classrooms house these children, many of whom have siblings in home schooling in the computer lab next door. The classrooms are mixed-age, with one devoted to math and science and the other to language arts, history, and related topics. The home schooling children sometimes participate in the class offerings.

Watkins stresses that his center still actively encourages the part-time home schooling student to use the facilities and does not try to steer them into the full-time option. In the home school section, other classes are offered. Watkins, who is, among other things, a history teacher, is planning a home schooling class on naval warfare and was readying tiny replicas of ships for a reenactment of the Battle of Trafalgar. He also would like to teach Russian and German, but he finds the children interested mainly in learning Spanish. There are about 100 home schooling children at the Manhattan Center, in addition to the children enrolled full-time in the school.

The Kent Choice Learning Center opened in fall 1997 with about 200 full-time students; they are on campus full-time. It started with Grades 3 to 12 and now serves Grade 2 as well. Unlike the Maywood Center, it emphasizes the campus school and has only a handful of part-time home schooling students. It also serves about 50 older students who are at risk of dropping out and some high school students needing special courses. It offers multiage and multigrade classrooms, with a strong parental participation component. Parents are required to volunteer at least 10 hr per month in the classroom. Approximately 70% of the students were home schooled prior to enrolling. Part-time students who are registered with the center may use the computer lab and take workshops on an occasional class. This may be the first public school established almost entirely by former home schoolers.

### HomeLink Technology Center

Larry Pierson and Gary Albers are teachers with the Battle Ground School District, who have, despite their youthful appearances, almost 50 years of combined teaching experience. They have team taught for almost as many years, and together they planned the HomeLink Technology Center. The long years as a team shows in the way they hand their presentation back and forth. After Albers observed, "You can't do this from the top

down," Pierson added, "Parents can be the best teachers." Then Albers gave the example. One of their families determined the number of speed bumps per foot based on the hum of the tires. The matter came up spontaneously, and the father adjusted the speed of the car to match "C" on a son's trombone. Knowing the frequency of "C" and the speed of the car, the boys calculated the bumps per foot. The family then stopped to measure the distance and confirm the calculation. Albers concluded, "Home schooling parents are serious about education."

Starting in about 1992, and for nearly 3 years, Albers and Pierson researched the state law and talked to people about the idea of a home schooling program in their district. The superintendent supported them from the start. When HomeLink Center opened in the 1992–1993 school year, about 3% of the school-age children in Battle Ground were home schooling—284 out of 8,500 total students. As there was little space, the center rented a storefront in a business mall. By spring 1994, the center boasted 30 Macintosh computers and 170 computer programs. It offered instruction for K through Grade 12 in technology, field trips, and a contract-based high school program leading to a diploma. Parents were required to attend with their child. The program established a parent advisory team to help with the overall direction of the school. Parents served (and still serve) rotating 2-year terms. The program relied mainly on the computer lab. However, in addition to Albers and Pierson, in 1994 the center hired a half-time teacher to consult with parents and students; she also began planning about 50 field trips per year. The hours of operation are school hours and one evening per week. From the start, parents were requesting expanded classes.

By the close of the 1998–1999 school year, the center had grown to become the largest of all the programs visited. It was serving 1,120 active students from Battle Ground and other nearby districts. It continued to offer part-time enrollment to home schooling students. Such students could take up to 9 hr of elective classes per week on-site for K through Grade 3, or 12 hr for Grades 4 through 8. HomeLink also had developed a variety of full-time enrollment options with required on-campus attendance for part of each week. One such option is a full-time program for Grades 7 through 12 leading to a diploma (with further options within the plan involving full-time on-campus attendance for 4-day classes) or public school independent study supported by consulting. Another is a "ParentPartnered" program for K through Grade 8, involving some required on-campus time, regular consultations with parents, and testing. There is an option for children who have experienced academic difficulty in a traditional classroom setting.

HomeLink also added a campus in nearby Camas, Washington. In response to parent demand, the most dramatic expansion came in classroom

offerings—more than 100 classes, many using a wide range of teachers under contract with the Battle Ground School District. From a modest storefront, it has moved into facilities that include 37 classrooms and offices. The parental participation requirement now varies according to the option chosen. For example, parents of children in Grades 5 to 8 promise to assist in the classroom for a half a day each month. Other parents promise to attend conferences and participate in other ways. Its lively World Wide Web page is <http://www.parentpartners.net>.

### Extended Learning Family

For more than 25 years, the Bethel Public Schools has operated the Extended Learning Family, a complex of three schools and a day care center: Challenger High, Voyager Junior High, Explorer Elementary, and Discovery Day Care. The complex serves a student body 20% to 25% of which are racial minorities, including African American, Korean (military families), Guamanian, and Samoan. This is a larger proportion than is found in the district as a whole.

The complex is largely teacher-founded and teacher-led. A teacher had initiated the program and became its first director. Pat Dempsey, the head teacher in the Challenger High School program, was teacher of the year statewide in 1991–1992. In the early 1990s, several home-schooled students enrolled in Dempsey's high school program. Dempsey believes they did so because they liked the teaching and learning style offered in the program. By spring 1995, the center was promoting its program for home schoolers and had 27 home schooling students, all of high school age, for an equivalent of 21 FTEs. A number were on campus full-time, mostly seniors who were satisfying a local school board requirement for full-time on-campus attendance in the senior year to receive a high school degree. Those on campus full-time still considered themselves "home schoolers." As Dempsey put it, it's "an attitude, a commitment that the parents make, a desire for shared responsibility in the child's schooling." The bulk of the home schooling students came in part-time and chiefly used the PLATO software available in the computer lab. Two had signed up for a full-time contract with a teacher, just as would the students at risk of dropping out. Dempsey has found PLATO excellent for use with high-risk students and was pleased to find it useful to home schoolers as well. Some of the home schooling group also have attended classes at the high school. In addition, the center provided ancillary services to 48 students. The computer lab was open and staffed 10 to 12 hours a day, including most evenings of the week. Some students came in during the day, but the early evening was most popular.

In the 1994–1995 school year, Dempsey had 292 contacts with 171 different families. This was at a time when the district could account for 306 home schooling students meeting filing requirements. Dempsey, who keeps a log of these contacts, believed that of those she talked to, 33.8% of the contacts indicated academic reasons for home schooling, 17.9% indicated personal safety reasons, 12.3% indicated values (including philosophical and religious), 12.3% indicated special education, and 5.6% indicated health. Twenty percent indicated other reasons. The concern for personal safety may be a reflection of this district. In the 1985–1986 school year, three students were killed on the grounds of the Spanaway Junior High School. By the 1998–1999 school year, the number of total registered home schoolers in Bethel was 525. The home schooling program has continued much as it had at its founding, with 20 FTEs using the program and with early evening lab hours three nights a week and parent participation. Dempsey is still heading the project, and she has begun to think about ways in which the program might evolve.

### Central Kitsap Off-Campus Program

The Central Kitsap School District encompasses Silverdale and Bremerton, home to a large naval facility. In 1990, home schoolers asked the superintendent to create a program for them. Many families already had enrolled their children part-time in classes in the district, but they thought a center could offer expanded services. Some hoped this would help their older child secure a high school diploma. The program began with a budget of \$20,000 for materials, housing in a portable behind the administration building, and Bill Dunn as a teacher. The district routinely transferred a second teacher, who lasted 5 days. After a more careful search and more detailed explanation of the program to the prospective candidate, it picked Al Parker, a junior high school teacher of 22 years. Parker took to the new challenge like a duck to water. He allowed that he missed his seventh graders, but quickly added, “I like doing this. I can’t tell you how much I like this. ... Someone is always saying thanks.”

About 35 children started using the program, and within a year it had grown to serve 100. During the first year, Dunn and Parker started developing curricula. They then relied heavily on education contracts entered between teacher, parent, and child, but they now use regular curricular materials. The center required students to have at least 6 hours of instructional contact a month, excluding field trips. Parents had to meet with an off-campus instructor once a quarter to discuss design of educational programs and the student’s progress. The program also administered tests of

reading and mathematics, on request. By the 1994–1995 school year, there were 260 children (110 FTEs), about 65 of whom were of high school age, and a waiting list of 100. The children were a diverse group, including national merit scholars, pregnant girls, and young mothers, with their parent or grandparent providing the home supervision. In that year, the center added a director, a teaching/consulting staff of five, and a special education instructor. On Fridays, 60 or 70 of the students went bowling.

Parker described the program as “a classic help system for homeschoolers” and for a handful of students whom no one else has been able to help. A typical schedule would involve enrichment classes on Wednesday, tutoring on Tuesday, testing on Mondays, and four to five field trips in a month. One involved a 3-day camping trip to Blake Island, home of the Tillicum Indians. In addition to planned instruction in geology, astronomy, marine sciences, boat safety, and wilderness first aid, students watched the Tillicum Dancers and participated in a beach cleanup along with state parks personnel and the Tillicum Tribe.

I joined a field trip planned around Kitsap Peninsula Day. The teachers and about 30 children of all ages and approximately 20 mothers and fathers took a bus to Olympia to tour the state capitol. I later sat in on a parent advisory committee in spring 1995. Parents were contemplating a junior/senior high school social activity for the approximately 80 children in that grade range. Some argued for a social event, others for participation in community work for credit. The committee consulted a parent questionnaire. Some parents wanted to end the requirement that a parent attend with the child, some wanted to see more team projects, and others wanted more science and arts instruction. Many wanted academic credit for field trips. There was a complaint that the enrichment classes were overcrowded. Much more was discussed. Parents were ready to pay extra for a specialist to lead classes and help those using the school science lab in the late afternoon.

By the 1998–1999 school year, the program had undergone major changes. It was emphasizing on-campus and independent study, and it had 275 children enrolled full-time. Many were in classes taking university-track courses. A tutor was helping children with college mathematics preparation. A parent who had enrolled a child until she was transferred to Virginia by the Navy continued to participate and offered an on-line advanced mathematics class. The computer lab was operating on extended time. Transfer students were using the program to help catch up on selected subjects that they had missed in their prior schools. There were seven full-time faculty members, three secretaries, a librarian, and two assistant teachers in the enrichment programs. The teachers, who were part-time, offered such rare courses as astronomy and deaf-language

courses. Four children were graduating. Enrolled students were taking up to three classes at a time, with the remainder of their studies continued under parent supervision off-campus. Students included a large segment of those requiring special education; another large segment included military families with a parent stationed at a nearby naval base. There was a waiting list of 100, with room for only about 35 new students each year. The district now limits enrollment to children from the district.

### Pathways Storefront School

In spring 1994, two friendly adversaries—Bill Hainer, a retired leader of the Washington Education Association (an affiliate of the National Educational Association) and Ben Edland, a former school superintendent—got together with Marion Cupp, director of special education, and planned a computer-managed learning program for Grades 7 through 12. They sold the Franklin Pierce School District on the idea and, by fall, they had a storefront location, with easy parking and bus service. Among the goals of the program was “Recognition of parents as primary teachers for their students.” This was to be an alternative education program that allowed students to meet graduation requirements. It would provide diagnostic assistance to help design an individual learning plan for each student and involve self-paced and self-directed study. Plans were to give a large role to learning software, videotapes, and similar resource material, although during the site visit, text books were in greater use than the computers. Sports participation would be made available at the student’s “home school” (the school that the student would attend if in attendance). The program allowed students to attend part-time at the Storefront School and part-time “somewhere else the rest of the time.” Early in the program, as the state rules on state foundation support became more stringent on seat time for younger students, the program scaled back to Grades 9 through 12. Many students are now enrolled full-time, although some are part-time and retain their home schooling status. In addition, a few students are enrolled at other schools and attended selected classes. Once enrolled, the full-time students may complete their work in local libraries, their home, or other locations within the district and still take advantage of the Storefront services.

The day of the visit, many high school-age students were using the computers or obtaining tutoring. Those present included a handful of pregnant girls and other students considered at risk of dropping out. As the program matured, it continued to attract at-risk students, but the growth was among students who were doing well in high school but who were not happy there.

According to Al Prentice, the new head teacher, the majority are “introverted” girls, often in honors courses and above grade level. In the 1998–1999 school year, the program attracted about 125 FTEs, or about 150 students. It had added grade levels and was serving Grades 6 to 12. There were 4.9 FTE faculty, with plans to add another next year, for 5.4 FTE faculty.

### Home/School Academic Learning Lab

Tom Snyder, a graphics designer, had worked with the Gig Harbor School District for 2 months tutoring students needing extra help to remain in a regular classroom or needing independent study for a special reason, as in the case, for example, of a student ready for fifth-grade reading and first-grade math. Snyder, who knew a number of home schooling parents, thought the tutoring program might appeal to them. Together, they presented the idea of a home schooling learning center to the district. The board was receptive, and space was made available at the Henderson Alternative School, a district school then in operation for more than 20 years, serving mostly teenagers in need of special counseling and guidance.

Home/School Academic Learning Lab (HALL) began by offering individualized curriculum aimed at the K to Grade 8 range. The program combined parental involvement, technology, and a few extra opportunities. For example, the home schoolers had access to the gymnasium for 2 to 3 hours per day, swimming lessons at a local high school, and a period for free swimming there. District textbooks were also available. HALL remained mostly self-contained, although the principal of Henderson approved purchases. In the 1993–1994 school year, HALL began using the Henderson school for high school credits, an attraction to older home schoolers who wanted a graded transcript and a diploma. The two programs also shared a teacher. For the most part, however, the home schoolers did not interact with the alternative school students, because, as the principal explained, the age differences did not lend itself to the practice. By spring 1994, there was a faculty of 2.5 FTEs and 160 children (about 50 FTEs). The following year, after some disagreement over program direction, Snyder had left and a new teacher had taken his place. The number of enrolled students fell somewhat, to 135 (41 FTE) children in K–8 range. Parents provide classroom instruction 2 days a week. In the 1994–1995 year, 185 home schooling students requested and received testing. Gig Harbor offers home schoolers the California Achievement Test and provides results to parents only.

By spring 1995, the program was experimenting with some integration with the alternative school. It offered a combined Washington state history class and combined student assemblies. Vision testing was open to all. The

students at Henderson Bay use the HALL computer lab. The Hall students sometimes use the Henderson program, including use of contract learning. The teacher–consultant for K–8 students, Lynn Whitener, remarked, “Getting away from the traditional school day has allowed creative programming.”

By the 1998–1999 school year, the basic facilities were much the same, with a principal and two teachers, a computer lab specialist, and an office assistant. A small lending library was added. However, the program rules were emphasizing the parent-partnered or independent study option, with its full-time enrollment requirements. Contract learning was used extensively in K through Grade 12. As required by state law, a minimum of 5 hours on site was required for all. A meeting with a teacher consultant was required every 45 days to review the plan and evaluate the student’s portfolio. On-site class offerings range from art; an integrated science, math, and art curriculum; some music and dramatic classes; and computer classes. Four times each year, students display their work at a curriculum fair.

Part-time contracted learning is also available, but only for students who are part-time enrolled in another district school. There are a limited number of true home schooling students—that is, those whose parents have filed and not surrendered their state-required declaration of intent to provide home schooling. HALL enrolls 15 home schoolers on a space-available basis; they must live in the district. These students use the computer lab, enroll in classes, use textbooks, and receive testing and consulting services. The district obtains state per-pupil support only for the proportion of actual seat time to full-time for these students. These students account for only five FTEs at the most in a year. There is a waiting list.

### A Composite of Computer Lab Experiences

To give the flavor of the programs with computer labs, I describe a composite of the programs. One is likely to find a handful of children, often with a parent. For example, at one center, one finds two boys playing computer games while their mother reads by herself. In a separate room, a group of families are learning Japanese with videotapes. All the members of each family are participating. They are planning a trip to Japan together. In the outer area, programs are on display, including music, material on the French impressionists, a visit to Sesame Street (Letters!), and a story machine. There are brochures for various other learning experiences, including one from a nearby parks department.

On the next day, five younger home schoolers and five of junior or senior high school age are very busy. The older children are using word processors. Two are siblings, with their mother. The mother remains most of

the time with the daughter, who is writing a poem and using a graphics program to produce a greeting card. At points during this session, the girl enlists help from both her mother and from the district's home schooling teacher. The two women turn to the program manual and finally ask the computer teacher for help. When the card is done, she and her daughter play a game based on geometrical concepts. She moves over to her son's station briefly, after he has indicated that he has a problem. Her son begins writing a story, but after about half an hour begins playing the same computer game with the other boy. They spend some of the time just talking. The teacher moves around and offers help where it is needed. She spends extra time with one girl. The two boys work almost without adult assistance the entire session, although a computer hardware problem provoked a flurry of attention until it was resolved. A second girl works alone. She asks for and receives no attention from the teachers. She stops working for about 15 min and watches the others. Then she turns to a typing tutor.

A third girl is working on a geometric drawing program (LOGO). She has a problem. Several times, the computer teacher from the next classroom offers help, as does the teacher and the mother of another home schooler. The girl remains frustrated. She needs the formula for the hypotenuse of a right triangle. Finally, I abandon my role as observer and provide it (and receive the girl's instant gratitude). Although three certified teachers were available, none seemed to recognize the problem she was facing. This slip was not a weakness of home schooling but of schools. Only 60% of 17-year-olds can compute with decimals, simple fractions, and percents; recognize geometric figures; solve simple equations; or use moderately complex mathematical reasoning (Campbell, Voelkl, & Donahue, 1997).

The third day, one finds a father with his two daughters, six mothers with eight children among them. The older children are working on a newsletter. Some of the mothers are using the photocopier, browsing materials, and talking to staff and each other about a project they have undertaken, while their children work at the computers alone. Late in the afternoon, a large number of parents file in for a parents' governing meeting. There is talk about the strain on the facility. "Let's not publicize it too much. It's getting harder to get in." Some of the parents wonder about the children in the same building who are in alternative schooling. One parent asks if weapons in the building might be a problem. Another asks about the number of pregnant girls. A teacher mentions that the alternative school has a 12-year-old girl expecting her second child. One mother is shocked. "My God, our life revolves around our little family!" There is some talk of how to serve the children from the alternative school. More than one parent group was considering a social event involving all the chil-

dren in the building, those in an alternative school and in the home schooling program.

Conclusions: Common Features, Trends, Sensitive Issues,  
and the Future

This intensive study of a small number of programs provides an initial understanding of these programs, but it does not permit generalization to similar programs in other policy environments. The study may suggest hypotheses to be tested over time against observations of a larger number of such programs. In that spirit, I offer a number of observations about the common features in the programs, trends, and sensitive issues relating to race, social status, control of education, and the future of such programs.

The state's interdistrict transfer law and substantial state funding per child provide some incentive to offer these programs. The financial picture is interesting, with most of the teachers running the programs feeling that they were underfunded. Some careful study seems warranted to determine what the appropriate level of support would be for a program in which parents participate so heavily. Although teacher time with students may be reduced, time with parents increases.

These programs require interested home schooling families, of course. Even if a majority of home schooling families would prefer not to use public school resources (Yeager, 1999), it appears that most districts will find sufficient interest to support a program. In fact, there are now approximately twice as many such programs in eastern Washington. Second, interested public school teachers are critical to the success of the program. In more than half of the programs examined, a teacher had started or helped start the program. In the case of the Seventh Planet, this included the public school adoption of a previously private program, at the initiative of a school principal acting in consultation with one of his teachers. In about a third of the programs, the initiative was shared in a very quiet way: Home schoolers simply began taking advantage of a program offered to at-risk students. A responsive faculty then began tailoring the program to the new constituency. School board support is essential, of course, as such programs almost always require budgetary and other authorizations at that level. Finally, a key element appears to be the support of the superintendent. In every case, the superintendent actively supported the program, although in one case he did not promote it publicly.

The teachers who are drawn to these programs often prefer to work part-time. In almost all the programs, there were several part-time teachers. Many of these had young children and were interested in home

schooling at a personal level. In addition, the teachers in all the programs were excited by the possibilities before them. All genuinely supported the home schooling option, even as they began to encourage home schoolers to enroll full-time in the program. In some cases, the teachers offer charismatic leadership, but most of the time the teachers were simply good, solid teachers who were selected by their district.

The most noticeable change over time was the growing tendency to encourage full-time enrollment. This was not, in my opinion, a case of a public school Trojan horse, as it has been called by one home schooling advocate. The motive seemed not to gain control of the curriculum, but to maximize the fiscal intake based on student count. State law allows almost \$5,000 per student for full-time enrollment, compared to \$300 per student for ancillary services and only a pro rata share of state assistance only for the time a student spends in direct contact with a teacher. Administrative costs mount as a center attempts to serve 80 children who constitute only 20 FTEs. Just keeping track of the seat time of a part-time child can generate considerable paperwork. (The most workable solution seems to be a low-tech sign-up sheet at the door.) Because of more lenient on-site requirements for older children, a handful of centers decided to offer programs to older children only. In any case, fiscal considerations have induced most of the centers to encourage parents to surrender their home schooling declaration of intent and to enroll their child full-time. The full-time enrollment option seems acceptable to most parents who probably learned to trust the teachers and others during the part-time enrollment period. Moreover, at this point, most of the parents in the full-time programs have had experience with home schooling, and most seem prepared to withdraw if they thought the curriculum or instructional practices were taking a wrong turn.

A second change over time was the tendency for those programs relying on computer labs as their focus to develop formal class offerings. The shift may be partially related to the drive to enroll children full-time, but there is ample evidence that parents were asking for these class offerings. Examination of programs in other policy environments would help sort out the causal factors behind this trend.

Race did not seem to be an issue, despite a belief among some professional educators that home schoolers are seeking to escape the public school melting pot. Most of the centers were located in predominantly White areas. Like home schoolers nationwide, those using these programs were predominantly White, but there were some persons of Color present in all the larger programs and some of the smaller programs. The somewhat greater proportion of minority-race children in alternative schools did not deter those home schoolers who initiated a program by first enroll-

ing their children part-time in such a school. The different ethnicity of the teacher was clearly irrelevant to the families choosing the Seventh Planet. One of the teachers in one of the centers thought there might be some home schoolers who were trying to avoid people with different cultural values and indicated that avoidance of minority-race persons did not seem to be the issue. Some home schoolers have expressed discomfort at sharing facilities with former dropouts. One teacher thought that this could be race-based but noted that the focus was on a boy who had witnessed a violent crime and a concern that one's child could be caught in the crossfire of a revenge shooting. In a few cases, home schooling families sharing facilities with an alternative school have considered joint social activities, but none of these vague plans have yet crystallized.

Another major issue, although one that was surmounted by almost all the public school teachers and administrators working in these programs, is philosophical. When public schools open their doors to home schooling families, they must operate in a very different way. Indeed, it looks as if the Trojan horse, if there is one, is sneaking into public school turf rather than into the home schooling enclave—that is, rather than losing control over home schooling, it seems more likely that home schoolers' ideas will influence public practices and curriculum. This new frontier for state and local education agencies represents a radically new service orientation toward families. Because home schooling parents are unlikely to send their children to a conventional school, public educators will attract home schoolers only if they are sensitive to their needs, preferences, and goals.

Certain fundamental features of these programs could become the model for tomorrow's education. The present paradigm calls for scheduling of groups of 30 same-age children for 5 to 6 hours a day for 180 days a year. It is possible that home schooling will produce a shift in the basic paradigm for education of children. In the new paradigm, children can learn alone or in groups from 2 to 30; they can be of widely different ages. Schools, teachers, and other professionals would provide the services; families would make the choices. Schools can advise them; offer curricular support; offer classes—on and off campus—and provide testing, transportation, and other auxiliary services. Parents and children can determine the mix each individual child will have of on- and off-campus classes, of independent study and guided study, of computer-assisted instruction, and of personal attention from a teacher.

If school districts are to attract home schoolers into a school, as these Washington districts are doing, they must be more flexible than school districts have been since parents gathered together to construct the one-room country schoolhouse. They must be ready to view each child as an individual, with an individual program. They must be ready to relinquish consid-

erable decision making to parents. They must heed advice from persons such as Jane Roland Martin, who urged professional educators to share their responsibilities with parents and community. She urged schools to see themselves, as they once did, as just one part of “the whole range of cultural custodians” (Martin, 1996). Professionals must stop treating their other partners like “humble assistants” or “dangerous rivals” (p. 10):

If we can envision an array of institutions, all of which share the tasks of preserving our vast cultural assets, see themselves and are seen by others as legitimate educational agents, and work together to transmit the [cultural] wealth, we will at least have a better idea of what to strive for.

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