

## Are We Enhancing our Homeschools with Outside Opportunities?

2007 Writing IV Class Marketing Project: Team Members

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This marketing report data was formulated from surveying 140 homeschool families in the Kansas City Metro area. As the homeschool population continues to grow each year, an increased amount of opportunities are available to the homeschool community. Our team wanted to find out what homeschool families were adding to their home curriculum. We analyzed data based on age groups, number of years homeschooled and categorized opportunities. Our statistics are based on 302 homeschool students.

According to the U.S. Department of Education in 2003, the educational years homeschooled followed these percentages:

**Elementary Grades 43% Middle School 28% High School 29%**

In our 2007 sampling of 140 homeschooling families, our statistics are very similar. Our percentages are as follows:

**Elementary Grades 46% Middle School 27% High School 27%**

Grouping the activities that homeschool families participate in through the year, our team summarized them into three categories. Using the three age groups listed above, we found the overall percentages of academics, sports/PE, and music.

Analyzing academic opportunities, it was evident that the majority of all core academic classes were being taught at home. The academic classes sought outside the home were consistent in all three age categories. The subjects of writing/composition, science, and foreign language were the top three classes that homeschool families chose to seek additional outside sources to enhance these academic subjects. The percentages of students taking writing, science, and foreign language classes significantly increased as the student progressed through the age levels. *Percentage of students taking the top three classes: (writing, science & foreign language)*

**Elementary Age 22% Middle School Age 57% High School Age 63%**

Out of the entire 302 students surveyed, 20% took writing classes outside their home curriculum. Thirty percent of the middle school ages and the high school ages took writing classes from outside classes. From additional survey feedback, writing classes outside the home were sought after because of the desire for another individual to provide critique for the student's writing work, specialized teaching and to have a positive peer pressure interaction. Overall, 12% of all students surveyed took science classes outside their home curriculum. Factoring in the high school age category only, this percentage showed 18% of high school age students surveyed took science classes from outside classes. Based on the additional feedback from polling, the top three reasons for taking science outside the home were to achieve high quality labs, specialized teaching and teamwork skills. Following these two classes, foreign language classes tied with science classes with an average of 12% of homeschool students who took outside foreign language classes. Consistently, foreign languages were at the same percentages for middle school ages and high school ages. Out of the total percentages of students taking foreign language classes, Latin had the highest percentage of students, which was 50%. The most populated age group for Latin students was the middle-school ages followed closely by elementary ages. The second highest foreign language was Spanish at 48%. The highest percentage age group was high school students followed by middle school ages. The only two other languages that appeared on the surveys were French and Sign Language each bringing in only 1%. The high school students taking foreign language classes outside the home took these classes at Johnson County Community College. With additional polling, we found many families invested in computer based programs, which can be taught at home. Taking this into account, it is obvious that the percentage is much higher of homeschool families including foreign language in their curriculum.

Families coming together to form co-ops, this supplemental learning environment was particularly high for elementary students' age group. Twenty-five percent of homeschool families surveyed (out of the 140 families) were involved in a co-op. After randomly polling some of the families that participated in a co-op,

it was shown that these co-ops met once a week on an average. Evaluating additional classes, twenty percent of high school aged students surveyed took both debate and computer classes outside the home. Art classes received significant percentages. Twelve percent of all students taking art classes were elementary ages. This percentage remained the same for middle school ages.

The academic analysis provides a clear mirror as to what the priorities are in seeking outside classes to compliment the home curriculum. Sports programs added a great perspective on programs as well. The sports programs that the homeschool students surveyed took were dance/gymnastics, soccer, basketball, swim team, volleyball, football, PE classes, karate, Tae Kwon Do and baseball. The highest percentage of participating students were in the elementary age group. Sixty percent of this age group surveyed was involved in a sport listed above. Listing the top sports program percentages, thirty percent of elementary students enjoyed dance & gymnastic classes. Following close behind, basketball attracted 22% of elementary ages. Soccer and PE classes tied with a participation of 14% each. From the overview, the involvement of sports programs was the highest at an elementary age. Based on the total # of students surveyed in each of the 3 age categories, the percentages were as follows: Participation in sports programs:

***Elementary Ages 94% Middle School Ages 72% High School Ages 33%***

For middle-school ages, baseball, soccer and basketball ranked the highest involvement. Oddly, dance and gymnastics took a sharp decline for this middle school age group. With the high-school age group, the 33% participation was, for the most part, equally distributed across the sports programs previously listed. The least two categories of involvement for high school students were PE classes and karate classes. The two highest percentages for high-school students were gymnastics and baseball. Overall, it is evident that as students progress in academic grades, their time involvement in sports declines.

Our survey strongly indicates that music opportunities are an important element in homeschool students' lives. The following statistics show this evidence. Participation in music lessons:

***Elementary Ages 46% Middle School Ages 43% High School Ages 25%***

Piano lessons, which ranked the highest in age group, were evident to be the popular instrument to learn. Thirty-four percent of all elementary homeschool students surveyed took piano lessons. It should be pointed out that the 34% would increase overall since some homeschool students are taught piano at home by a parent. By middle school ages, piano lessons decreased by about half in student participation. The high-school age followed the same pace as it decreased by 18% from the middle school age. The violin and the guitar were the two instruments that trailed the piano for outside lessons.

After analyzing the three categories of academics, sports and music, our team gained a great deal of knowledge of where the participation of activity levels is outside each homeschool family that was surveyed. Our statistics show that the majority of all the core academics were taught in the family's home. As the homeschool opportunities increase outside the home, homeschool families surveyed selectively chose subjects, lessons and activities that would help supplement the learning at home. Out of the 140 homeschool families surveyed, the number of years homeschooling averaged 8.12 years. The survey with the highest number of years was 22 years. With this average of over 8 years of experience, it is evident that these homeschool parents have good insight and knowledge of balancing the homeschool environment. As the outside subjects, lessons and activities are selected, the factors of time and finances must be measured into the decisions. The fact that many families surveyed have many children, the outside opportunities must acquire a family balance between the students' needs and wants.

Having academics as a priority, it was evident in our statistics that more students participated in academic activities as they increased in age level. Of the 302 students that were surveyed, academic classes that complimented the home curriculum increased as the student aged. The elementary ages and the middle school ages showed very high percentages of sports participation. Close to half of the majority of homeschool students surveyed participated in music lessons. With continued homeschool growth in our communities, it is a very positive sign to see the opportunities that are available to enhance the learning at home. As a team, we extend our thanks to all the families that participated in the survey section of our marketing project. Please note that social activities were not surveyed in this marketing project.