

Geography in Homeschool America: Status and Opportunities

prepared for GENIP

by

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September, 2004

About 1.1 million students (1,096,000) were being homeschooled in the United States in the spring of 2003. [This amounts] to 2.2 percent [of U.S. students, ages 5 to 17, with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through grade 12]. [A]bout 4 out of 5 homeschoolers were homeschooled only (82 percent) while about 1 out of 5 homeschoolers were enrolled in public or private schools part time (18 percent).

(Princiotta et al. 2004).

A greater percentage of homeschoolers compared to nonhomeschoolers were white, non-Hispanic in 1999-75 percent compared to 65 percent.... Parents gave a wide variety of reasons for homeschooling their children. These reasons included being able to give their child a better education at home, for religious reasons, and because of a poor learning environment at school.

(Bielick et al. 2001).

Children have been educated at home by their families or private tutors for centuries, but by the early 20th century, compulsory school attendance was mandated throughout the United States. A movement advanced by liberal "Flower Children" of the 1960s to free their offspring from the strictures and oppressive structures of public and private institutions of basic education was taken up through the ensuing decades by religious fundamentalist families as a way to ensure that their children would learn content and values consistent with their own beliefs. Seen at first as a renegade practice to be discouraged or outlawed by local and state authorities, by the close of the 20th century, homeschooling¹ had become a legal and increasingly popular alternative to educating a diverse segment of America's children.

According to Brian D. Ray, founder and president of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), some 1,700,000 to 2,100,000 K-12 children were homeschooled in the U.S. during 2002-2003, and the U.S. Department of Education's

¹ Note on terminology: Lines (2003, 1) points out that "the *Random House Dictionary*...spells homeschooling as one word. An analysis of electronic and print media suggests that those who practice it also favor *homeschooling*. Academic writers have preferred *home schooling*, *home-schooling*, or *home education*, but this preference seems to be changing."

National Center for Education Statistics estimates that there were approximately 1.1 million homeschooled students in the spring of 2003 (Ray 2003; Princiotta et al. 2004). Estimated growth rates range from 1.6% to 15% annually (Bielick et al. 2001, Ray 2002, Belfield 2004). Precise and accurate numbers are virtually impossible to determine, in part because national and local education agencies do not consistently collect such data and because many homeschoolers do not find it necessary or desirable to report their activities to any central authority (Stevens 2001; Lines 2003; Belfield 2004). Even using conservative estimates, more children participate in homeschooling than in charter schools and voucher programs combined (Belfield 2004). The homeschooling movement is growing in numbers, acceptance, and political clout, drawing attention of academic researchers, policy-makers, and education administrators (McDowell and Ray 2000; Stevens 2001; Nemer 2002; Lines 2003).

In a time of active educational reform from which our discipline is notable by its absence, the geography community has an opportunity to gain recognition and to positively impact a growing sector of the student population by tapping into the homeschool market's need for quality instructional materials. In order to do so, we must first understand the contemporary homeschool movement in the United States and how geography fits into the picture.

The present study addresses five areas:

1. The Landscape of Homeschool America
2. Methods, Curriculum, and Resources Used by Homeschoolers
3. Publishers/Sources of Geography Content for Homeschoolers
4. Homeschoolers' Desiderata for Geography Materials
5. Opportunities for Geography in Homeschool America: Some Recommendations

Data and analyses in this report are based on review of scholarly research, literature and Web sites of practitioners and advocacy groups, monitoring of electronic discussion groups, attendance at a homeschool conference, and communication with homeschoolers via e-mail, telephone, and personal interviews. While not a random or fully representative sample, the groups and individuals contacted espouse a range of ideological beliefs, approaches to homeschooling, and involvement with geography.

1. The Landscape of Homeschool America

Homeschool America covers vast and varied terrain. Homeschooling families are an eclectic bunch, in terms of family characteristics, worldview, reasons for homeschooling, educational approaches, preferred curricula and resources, and degree of interest in/engagement with geography. The one thing homeschoolers have in common is a deep commitment to providing their children with educational opportunities that are consistent with their values and beliefs.

As with the rest of education policy in the U.S., requirements for homeschooling (and subsequent reporting and record-keeping) vary widely from state to state. Belfield (2004, 18) points out that homeschooling is “heterogeneous, difficult to classify, and expensive to monitor.” The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) places states in 4 categories, based upon the level of reporting and action required of parents:

- **States requiring no notice:** No state requirement for parents to initiate any contact.
- **States with low regulation:** State requires parental notification only
- **States with moderate regulation:** State requires parents to send notification, test scores, and/or professional evaluation of student progress.
- **State with high regulation:** State requires parents to send notification or achievement test scores and/or professional evaluation, plus other requirements (e.g. curriculum approval by the state, teacher qualification of parents, or home visits by state officials).

As seen in Table 1, ten states have no reporting requirements for homeschooling families; 13 states and the District of Columbia require only notification of intent to homeschool; 16 states have moderate reporting and assessment requirements; and 11 states have more rigorous reporting and assessment requirements (HSLDA 2004). For an example of the establishment of homeschooling regulation in Pennsylvania, see Richman (1989).

Table 1: Level of Homeschooling Regulation by States

No required reporting	AK, CT, ID, IL, IN, OK, MI, MO, NJ, TX
Low regulation	AL, AZ, CA, DC, DE, KS, KY, MS, MT, NM, NE, NV, WI, WY
Moderate regulation	AR, CO, FL, GA, HI, IA, LA, MD, NC, NH, OH, OR, SC, SD, TN, VA
High regulation	MA, ME, MN, ND, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WA, WV

Source: HSLDA 2004.

Numbers and growth rate of homeschooled students

According to the most recent data available, an estimated 1.1 million U.S. students² were being homeschooled during the Spring of 2003, up from an estimated 850,000 in 1999.³ The percentage of school-aged population being homeschooled increased from 1.7% in 1999 to 2.2% in 2003, representing "about 0.5 percent of the 2002-2003 school-age population and a 29 percent relative increase over the 4-year period." (Princiotta et al. 2004, 3).

Brian D. Ray, founder and president of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), estimates that some 1,700,000 to 2,100,000 K-12 children were homeschooled in the U.S. during 2002-2003, which represents an increase of 500% over the number homeschooled in 1990-1991. NHERI estimates the annual growth rate to be 7-15% per year (Ray 2003, 2004).

Patricia Lines, one of the leading researchers on homeschooling and educational choice, estimates growth rate to be about 10% per year, projecting 1,038,000-1,400,000 homeschooled students in 2002-2003; she believes the 2 million figure to be too high an estimate, since that would represent 30-40% of the privately schooled population. Still, 1 million homeschooled students represent about 2% of all school-aged children and more than 20% of the privately schooled population. However, "a much larger percentage will have had some homeschooling experience prior to graduation because of turnover in the homeschooling population," with an average duration of 2 years of education at home (Lines 2003, 7-8; Belfield 2004).

NCES defines homeschooled students as those whose "parents reported them as being schooled at home instead of at a public or private school for at least part of their education and if their part-time enrollment in public or private schools did not exceed 25 hours per week," excluding students schooled at home due to temporary illness. (Princiotta et al. 2004, 1)

The NCES definition of homeschooled students contrasts with Lines's categorization of students who are educated at home. She describes two types of off-campus learning for K-12 students: *independent homeschooling* and *enrolled home study*. In the former, curriculum and assessment are wholly determined by the parents, though they may supplement with public resources. In the latter, "students follow a curriculum set by the school and participate in assessments required of all enrolled children" (Lines 2003, 1; see also Belfield 2004). Many variations and permutations of the two types exist, and terminology may be used loosely or differently among various constituencies.

NCES estimates that 82% of homeschooled students are homeschooled only, while the remaining 18% are enrolled part-time in public or private school (see Table 2).

² The range at 95% confidence interval is 915,000-1,277,000 children

³ NCES defines students as "children ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through grade 12" (Princiotta et al. 2004, 1). The total number of K-12 students in the U.S. equaled 50,188,000 in 1999 and 50,707,000 in 2003 (ibid.).

Table 2: Enrollment Status of Homeschooled Students, 1999 & 2003

	1999		2003	
	#	%	#	%
Homeschooled only	697,000	82.0	898,000	82
Enrolled in school part-time	153,000	18.0	198,000	18
Enrolled < 9 hrs/week	107,000	12.6	137,000	12.5
Enrolled 9-25 hrs/week	46,000	5.4	61,000	5.6
TOTAL	850,000	100.0	1,096,000	100.0

Source: Princiotta et al. 2004, 2.

Lines (2003, 7) notes that "[s]tatistics on homeschoolers will probably include enrolled home study students as well, because those who enroll their children will often say they are homeschooling in response to a survey," and most surveys have not distinguished between the two types. Further, many families who enroll their students at least part-time also participate in local homeschooling groups, conferences, and discussion lists.

Historical Background of Homeschooling

"Once commonplace in all nations, homeschooling had waned to near-extinction in the mid-1970s.... Home education is enjoying a surge in popularity and success, which in turn has led to increased interest by the news media," including cover or front-page stories in Time (10/98), Newsweek (8/01), the New York Times, and Wall Street Journal (Ray 2004, 1).

State legislatures began to require compulsory schooling in the mid-nineteenth century, and by the mid-twentieth century, universal high school graduation from a public or private institution had become an accepted goal nationwide. Members of a few religious communities (e.g., Amish, LDS, Seventh Day Adventist) chose to educate their children at home throughout this time, but very few families in the general U.S. population chose to teach their children at home (Lines 2003). Homeschooling as we know it today evolved from the alternative school movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Ray 2004; Lines 2003; Stevens 2001). During those decades, "most homeschooling families were pursuing a liberal philosophy of education that involved a child-directed approach," as advocated by former public school teacher John Holt (Lines 2003, 6; Stevens 2001). Fundamentalist Christians and other families with strong religious motivations adopted homeschooling with vigor in the 1980s. Among those providing impetus were Raymond and Dorothy Moore, Seventh Day Adventists and educational researchers who advocate delaying formal education until children are developmentally ready and assert that parents are the ultimate authority and best teachers (Stevens 2001).

Until the early 1980s, most families who kept their children out of public or private schools were breaking state law; in 1983, homeschooling was legal in only 4 states. The movement gathered so much momentum during the ensuing decade that the practice was legal in all 50 states by 1993, largely due to the tremendous organizational and lobbying efforts of the Home School Legal Defense Association (Sevens 2001).⁴

Enrolled home study was first offered in the very late 1800s through correspondence programs of private schools. Baltimore's Calvert School started a study-at-home workbook program during a flu epidemic, and some parents chose to continue teaching their children at home. Alaska's correspondence program, popular because of the state's low population density, is based on the Calvert model. (Lines 2003).

Characteristics of Homeschooling Families

[I]t would be a mistake to stereotype homeschoolers. They include the full range of American society. Homeschooling families possess a full range of religions and ideologies. The unschoolers, who are often left of center, remain a healthy and vocal segment of the homeschooling population. Christian homeschoolers, often right of center, are also a very healthy and vocal part of the population.

Lines (2003, 10)

Homeschooling is "statistically associated with white, religious, 2-parent households" (Stevens 2001, 13). Sociologist Mitchell Stevens's demographic findings based on ethnographic fieldwork are "consistent with what survey data and 'insider' wisdom would tell us": homeschoolers are predominantly white, middle class, conservative Protestants, full-time or nearly full-time mothers, who tend to have rather large families (ibid., 17; also Belfield 2004). However as Ray (2004, 8) points out, "[f]amilies from all social and racial backgrounds are taking on the education of their own children." Numbers of non-white homeschoolers seem to be increasing faster than the overall rate (Lines 2003). In addition, "the work of homeschooling is heavily gendered," with mothers bearing primary responsibility for teaching the children in most families (Stevens 2001, 11; see also Belfield 2004). Fathers take the lead in an estimated 10% of homeschooling families (Lines 2001).

Recognizing that homeschoolers are an incredibly diverse bunch, it is still possible to group them into two broad categories, termed "*believers*" and "*inclusives*" by Stevens (2001) and "*ideologues*" and "*pedagogues*" by VanGalen (1988) and Nemer (2002). In general, the *believers* are the conservative Protestant Christian homeschoolers, whose organizations often require members to sign or affirm a "statement of faith." The *inclusives* are, essentially, everyone else: they are "harder to encompass with a single term," since they represent a wide range of religious traditions and lifestyles; Stevens (2001, 19) notes that "these parents often have little in common with one another other

⁴ The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is discussed further below.

than their shared interest in homeschooling." Inclusive organizations often have a nondiscrimination or inclusion statement. Believers and highly and hierarchically organized; inclusives are not. Stevens (2001, 175) concludes that "ultimately, the form and the fate of the two sides are so different because the movement straddles two cultural landscapes."

Another set of lenses through which to view the landscape of homeschool America is that of "ideologues" and "pedagogues," a typology proposed by Jane VanGalen (1987, 1988) and modified by Kariane Nemer (2002) into "ideological motivations" and "pedagogical motivations." Ideologues homeschool primarily in order to transmit "specific values, beliefs, and skills that they want their children to learn," while pedagogues homeschool primarily because they do not believe schools do an adequate job teaching in ways that allow children to learn best (VanGalen 1988, 55). Nemer (2002, 8) takes issue with the dichotomy of VanGalen's typology, arguing that homeschoolers are multidimensional and "rarely [fit] cleanly into one or the other category." Instead, Nemer prefers the terms "ideological motivations" and "pedagogical motivations." The former encompasses "a desire to pass along to one's children a particular ideological view of the world," predominantly fundamentalist Christian, but also Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, or staunch libertarian, among others (Nemer 2002, 9). The latter encompasses "a desire to educationally prepare one's children in a specific manner, separate and apart from any desire to instill particular views" (ibid.). Nemer also adds a third dimension, "environmental motivations," encompassing a desire to shield children from negative social influences found in public and private schools (e.g., drugs, violence, peer pressure, cliques and pettiness).

Reasons for Homeschooling

Parents choose to homeschool their children for a variety of pedagogical, philosophical, religious, and social reasons. They espouse both conservative and liberal values and beliefs, as well as the whole spectrum in between (Lines 2003). Princiotta et al. (2004, 2) found that parents choose to homeschool their children for reasons including:

- concern about the regular schools' environments (31%)
- providing religious or moral instruction (30%)
- dissatisfaction with the instruction at regular schools (16%)
- special needs of children (14%)
- other—e.g., family unity, individualized teaching, etc (9%)

The questions about reasons for homeschooling were asked differently in the 1999 and 2003 NCES studies, and thus are not comparable. Bielick et al. (2001, 10-11) coded parental reasons for homeschooling into 16 categories, including:

- can give child better education at home (48.9%)
- religious reasons (38.4%)

- poor learning environment at school (25.6%)
- family reasons (16.8%)
- to develop character/morality (15.1%)
- object to what school teaches (12.1%)
- school does not challenge child (11.6%)
- other problems with available schools (11.5%)
- student behavior problems at school (9.0%)
- child has special needs/disability (8.2%)
- transportation/convenience (2.7%)
- child not old enough to enter school (1.8%)
- want private school but cannot afford it (1.7%)
- parent's career (1.5%)
- could not get into desired school (1.5%)
- other reasons—e.g., child's choice, allow parental control over material learned, flexibility, want year-round schooling (22.2%)

Parents could give multiple responses, so the percentages above do not total 100.

Other researchers and families cite similar motivations for homeschooling: providing moral instruction; avoiding instruction that runs contrary to families' beliefs (e.g., secular humanism, evolution); avoiding "inappropriate government intervention" (Nemer 2002, 10); respecting and teaching cultural values and knowledge; escaping low expectations and tracking; fostering children's innate creativity and curiosity; providing individual attention; providing a positive learning environment. Parents may choose to homeschool because they are dissatisfied with local public schools and have few, if any, other options. Belfield (2004, 6) points out that homeschooling is "more common in non-metropolitan areas with fewer private schools." This motivation was also noted by a homeschooling mother in eastern Oregon, which is largely rural: her family homeschools for philosophical reasons, but she believes members of her homeschool group would enroll their children in religiously-affiliated private schools if suitable institutions were located nearby.

Regardless of specific individual motivations, "home-based education appears to embody many elements that parents and families have desired... a high degree of parental involvement in their children's lives, community-oriented education, success in academics, and an emphasis on the transmission of cultural values by family, friends, and one's own religious community" (Ray 2004, 35).

Academic Performance of Homeschooled Students

Homeschooled students in the U.S. and Canada score 15 to 30 percentile points, on average, above their public school peers.

Ray 2004, 9.

Numerous studies have extolled the superior performance on standardized tests of homeschooled students compared with the general population. However, researchers caution that most data are based on convenience samples and are sponsored by advocacy organizations (Stevens 2001; Lines 2001, 2003). Furthermore, biases are introduced by voluntary testing and reporting (poor achievers are less likely to participate), and treatment effects of school choice endogeneity and family background cannot be identified (Belfield 2004).

About 6,000 homeschooled students took the SAT I exam in 2001, the first year “homeschool” was accurately listed as a category (Belfield 2004). They represented 0.5% of all test-takers that year. Although absolute scores may not be useful because of selection effect and the small population of homeschool test-takers, homeschooled students scored, on average, higher on the verbal than on the math sections of the exam. Similarly higher verbal than math scores were found in an examination of 1998 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Academic Proficiency (Belfield 2004; Rudner 1999).

Homeschooling Organizations and Support Mechanisms

Homeschooling is a world of organizations. Most exist at the local level, reflecting the grass-roots nature of the movement. Homeschool groups may range in size from just a few families in a small town or virtual community to some 80,000 in the most prominent national advocacy organization—the Home School Legal Defense Association.

Sociologist Mitchell Stevens credits the well-developed organizational structures and philosophies of the “believer” groups with their dominance in the public image of homeschooling, noting that “questions about how to organize are always political” (Stevens 2001, 193). He claims that “the ‘Christian’ homeschool movement is decidedly conservative and exclusive...because the primary architects of the movement’s organizational system have designed *their* theology into the plans” (ibid., emphasis in original). The more relaxed and democratic nature of inclusive organizations, on the other hand, may result in “sluggishness in decision-making and unpredictable resource commitments”—characteristics that are detrimental to the coherence and public image of a social movement (ibid.).

The largest and arguably most powerful national organization for homeschoolers is the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). Started in Washington state in 1983 and currently based in the DC Metro area (Purcellville, VA), HSLDA has a membership of 80,000 and claims to represent 10% of all homeschooling families (Kerchner 2004). For an annual membership fee of \$100, homeschoolers get access to advocacy and legal services and information about issues affecting homeschoolers in their state. Subsidiary organizations include the National Center for Home Education which provides a base for state-level organizing and initiatives; Generation Joshua

political action and education initiative for homeschooled students; and Patrick Henry College, an accredited four-year higher education institution which opened its doors in 2000 and is geared specifically for homeschool students.

HSLDA is an avowedly Christian organization, but claims to represent and welcome membership from homeschoolers of all faiths. Not all homeschoolers are comfortable with HSLDA's political clout and faith-based underpinnings, however; National Home Education Legal Defense (NHELD) was formed in 2000 as an inclusive alternative to HSLDA. Other national-level organizations include (but are not limited to) the American Homeschool Association (AHA), Home School Learning Network (HSLN), Jewish Home Educators Network (JHEN), National Black Home Educators Resource Association (NBHERA), and National Challenged Homeschoolers Association (NATHHAN).

Local and regional homeschool support groups are too numerous to be comprehensively catalogued. Linda Dobson, a best-selling author of how-to-homeschool books and renowned speaker on the homeschool lecture circuit, says that when researching her most recent book, she stopped counting after about 2,000 organizations (Dobson, personal communication). Such groups may be faith-based, approach-based, or geographically-based. The growth of the Internet has spawned a myriad of virtual support groups who operate via online discussion boards; Yahoo!Groups seems to be the most common platform for such groups because the service is free to anyone with an internet connection. A search of Yahoo!Groups in mid-August 2004 for the terms "homeschool" and "homeschooling" yielded more than 5500 groups, ranging in size from four members to several thousand.⁵ A search for "geography" and some variant of "homeschool" yielded about 30 groups.

In addition to online resources, there are currently on the market hundreds of books offering advice and guidance on homeschooling topics. Authors in the how-to-homeschool canon include--but are certainly not limited to--Cafi Cohen, Linda Dobson, Patrick Farenga, David Guterson, John Holt, Chris Klicka, Raymond and Dorothy Moore, and Mary Pride. Significant periodicals include *Growing Without Schooling*,⁶ *Home Education Magazine*, *Practical Homeschooling*, *The Drinking Gourd*⁷, *The Old Schoolhouse Magazine*, and *The Teaching Home*. The latter magazine had a 2001 circulation of more than 100,000 (Ray 2004).

Conferences represent another avenue for support and sharing of ideas and resources on homeschooling. The conference season generally runs from March through September, though some groups hold conventions in other months, as well. Tim's Great Stuff, inc. is a bag-stuffing business operated by homeschooling father Tim von Duyke; his 2004 convention list (intended for prospective vendors) includes more than 500 meetings, with individual projected conference size (based on number of bags ordered) ranging from 25 to 4,000, for a total audience of more than 125,000 (von Duyke 2004).

⁵ This included both active and inactive groups.

⁶ Ceased publication in 2001, but back issues remain available.

⁷ Focused on African American homeschoolers.

Ian Slatter of HSLDA reports that the largest conferences attract 6,000-9,000 participants (Slatter 2004).

2. Methods, Curriculum, and Resources Used by Homeschoolers

Homeschoolers of all stripes employ a wide array of instructional approaches, ranging from setting up a traditional classroom in the home to letting the children’s interests guide all learning (see Table 3). Some use a pre-packaged curriculum, while others pick and choose among curricula and resources. Some enroll in distance learning programs or classes, engage tutors, take high school or college classes on campus or online, participate in charter schools, or form co-ops to share teaching responsibilities. The age at which parents begin to homeschool their children ranges from infancy to age 8 or even 12; most do not report their school activities until the children reach the state’s mandatory enrollment age.

Table 3: Instructional/Learning Approaches Used by Homeschoolers

<p>School-at-Home</p>	<p>School-at-home is the style most often portrayed in the media because it is so easy to understand and can be accompanied by a photo of children studying around the kitchen table. This is also the most expensive method and the style with the highest burnout rate. Most families who follow the school-at-home approach purchase a boxed curriculum that comes with textbooks, study schedules, grades, and record keeping. Some families use the school-at-home approach but make up their own lesson plans and find their own learning materials. The advantage of this style is that families know exactly what to teach and when to teach it. That can be a comfort when you are just starting out. The disadvantage is that this method requires much more work on the part of the teacher/parent and the lessons are not as much fun for the children.</p>
<p>Unit Studies</p>	<p>Unit studies use your child’s interest and then ties that interest into subject areas like math, reading, spelling, science, art, and history. For example, if you have a child who is interested in ancient Egypt, you would learn the history of Egypt, read books about Egypt, write stories about Egypt, do art projects about pyramids, and learn about Egyptian artifacts or mapping skills to map out a catacomb. Packaged unit studies are available on popular topics like the <u>Little House</u> and <u>American Girl</u> books and also for virtues like patience, trust, and obedience. The advantage of this homeschooling method is that it recognizes the fact that people learn best when they are interested in the topic. The disadvantage is that sometimes parents can be overzealous and make a unit study out of everything, scaring the child off from talking about a new interest they might have.</p>

<p>"Relaxed" or "Eclectic" Homeschooling</p>	<p>"Relaxed" or "Eclectic" homeschooling is the method used most often by homeschoolers. Basically, eclectic homeschoolers use a little of this and a little of that, using workbooks for math, reading, and spelling, and taking an unschooling approach for the other subjects. The advantage of this method is that the parent feels that the subjects they believe are most important are covered thoroughly. This method also allows the family to choose textbooks, field trips, and classes that fit their needs and interests. A good magazine for the eclectic homeschooler is <u>Home Education Magazine</u> (1-800-236-3278).</p>
<p>Unschooling</p>	<p>Unschooling is also known as natural, interest-led, and child-led learning. Unschoolers learn from everyday life experiences and do not use school schedules or formal lessons. Instead, unschooled children follow their interests and learn in much the same way as adults do—by pursuing an interest or curiosity. In the same way that children learn to walk and talk, unschooled children learn their math, science, reading, and history. John Holt, schoolteacher and founder of the unschooling movement, told educators in his book, <u>What Do I Do Monday?:</u> "We can see that there is no difference between living and learning, that living is learning, that it is impossible, and misleading, and harmful to think of them as being separate. We say to children, 'you come to school to learn.' We say to each other [educators], 'our job is to teach children to learn.' But the children have been learning, all the time, for all of their lives before they met us. What is more, they are very likely to be much better at learning than most of us who plan to teach them something." The advantage to unschooling is that unschooled children have the time and research abilities to become experts in their areas of interest. The disadvantage is that because unschoolers do not follow the typical school schedule, they may not do as well on grade-level assessments and may have a harder time if they reenter the school system. Unschooling books are available from the John Holt Association Bookstore (now operated by FUN-Books.com) at 1-888-FUN-7020.</p>
<p>Classical Homeschooling</p>	<p>The "classical" method began in the Middle Ages and was the approach used by some of the greatest minds in history. The goal of the classical approach is to teach people how to learn for themselves. The five tools of learning, known as the Trivium, are reason, record, research, relate, and rhetoric. Younger children begin with the preparing stage, where they learn basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. The grammar stage is next, which emphasizes compositions and collections, and then the dialectic stage, where serious reading, study, and research take place. All the tools come together in the rhetoric stage, where communication is the primary focus. Popular books on the classical approach include <u>The Well-Trained Mind: A guide to Classical Education at Home</u> by Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer and <u>Recovering the Lost tools of Learning</u> by Douglas Wilson. Also available is the book <u>Teaching the Trivium</u> by Harvie and Laurie Bluedorn from Trivium Pursuit (1-309-537-3641).</p>
<p>The Charlotte Mason Method</p>	<p>The Charlotte Mason method has at its core the belief that children deserve to be respected and that they learn best from real-life situations. According to Charlotte Mason, children should be given time to play, create, and be involved in real-life situations from which they can learn. Students of the Charlotte Mason method take nature walks, visit art museums, and learn geography, history, and literature from "living books," books that make these subjects come alive. Students also show what they know, not by taking tests, but via narration and</p>

	<p>discussion. Popular books on this method include <u>A Charlotte Mason Education</u> and <u>More Charlotte Mason Education</u>, both by Katherine Levison.</p>
<p>The Waldorf Method</p>	<p>The Waldorf method is also used in some homeschools. Waldorf education is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner and stresses the importance of educating the whole child—body, mind, and spirit. In the early grades, there is an emphasis on arts and crafts, music and movement, and nature. Older children are taught to develop self-awareness and how to reason things out for themselves. Children in a Waldorf homeschool do not use standard textbooks; instead, the children create their own books. The Waldorf method also discourages the use of television and computers because they believe computers are bad for the child’s health and creativity. Books about the Waldorf method are available from the Rudolf Steiner Bookstore (1-916-961-8727). Waldorf curriculum and support is available from Oak Meadow (1-818-704-1046).</p>
<p>Montessori</p>	<p>Montessori materials are also popular in some households. The Montessori method emphasizes "errorless learning," where the children learn at their own pace and in that way develop their full potential. The Montessori homeschool emphasizes beauty and avoids things that are confusing or cluttered. Wooden tools are preferred over plastic tools, and learning materials are kept well-organized and ready to use. The Montessori method also discourages television and computers, especially for younger children. Although Montessori materials are available for high school students, most homeschoolers use the Montessori method for younger children. Books and curriculum on the Montessori method are available from American Montessori Consulting (1-562-598-2321).</p>
<p>Multiple Intelligences</p>	<p>"Multiple intelligences" is an idea developed by Howard Gardner and Harvard University’s "project zero." The belief is that everyone is intelligent in his or her own way and that learning is easiest and most effective when it uses a person’s strengths instead of their weakness. For example, most schools use a linguistic and logical-mathematical approach when teaching, but not everyone learns that way. Some students, the bodily kinesthetic learners for example, learn best by touching and not by listening or reading. Most successful homeschoolers naturally emphasize their children’s strengths and automatically tailor their teaching to match their child’s learning style. Successful homeschoolers also adjust their learning environment and schedule so that it brings out their child’s’ best. Some children prefer structure and learn best when they are told what to do, others learn best on their own. Some children do their best work around the kitchen table, and others excel when they are out of doors. The goal for the homeschooling parents is to identify how, when, and what their child learns best and to adapt their teaching style to their child.</p>
<p>DVD/Video Schooling</p>	<p>This approach can be used with all different styles of homeschooling. Use quality educational titles to help your child learn Science, Physics, American History, World History, Religion, Preschool skills, Music, Art and more. This is not watching television. A powerful movie can inspire a new interest or help your child develop a solid understanding of a complicated area of learning. Educational DVDs from quality producers like National Geographic, PBS, A&E, and The Discovery Channel are</p>

	available from Homeschool.com's DVD rentals.
Internet Homeschooling	Harness the power of the Internet by accessing virtual tutors, virtual schools, online curriculum, and quality websites. You need never feel that you can't find the help, expert advice or resources necessary to homeschool your child. Did you hate math as a child and feel you can't possible help your child learn math? Or what about (YIKES) Algebra? How about Physics? No problem. There is a wealth of cutting-edge online curriculum programs, private distance learning schools, homeschool support academies and more.

Source: Homeschool.com (<http://www.homeschool.com/Approaches/default.asp>)

Ray (2004) estimates that approximately three-quarters of homeschooling parents put together their own curricula by picking and choosing among existing resources and creating their own. The remaining 25% “actively seek out, examine, and choose from a host of available ‘complete curriculum packages’” (Ray 2004, 115). Parents spend an average of \$300-600 per child each year for homeschooling materials (ibid., p. 158).

As noted earlier, record-keeping and reporting requirements vary from state to state. Some parents, especially those in states with more regulation, choose to enroll their children in an “umbrella program” that offer a menu of services, including record-keeping, curricula, classes, testing and assessment, transcripts, and diplomas. Among the many programs available are:

- Abbingtion Hill School
- Calvert School
- Christian Liberty Academy – started in 1967; homeschool divisions serve more than 50,000 students, with 900 enrolled on-campus (Ray 2004)
- Clonlara School/Clonlara Home Based Education Program – 7,500 students enrolled; 60 students age 5-18 on campus (Ray 2004)
- Home Study International
- Keystone National High School – based in Bloomsburg, PA
- Pennsylvania Homeschoolers – based in Kittanning, PA; offers a newsletter, transcript and diploma program, network of state-approved evaluators, online AP classes
- South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools (SCAIHS) – “an approval agency for homeschooling families on a par equal with local school boards” (Ray 2004, 150).
- Seton Home Study School – Roman Catholic emphasis; more than 10,000 students enrolled (Ray 2004)

Among the popular sources for complete curricula include:

- Alpha Omega Publishing
- A Beka Publishing
- Bob Jones University
- KONOS

Other publishers of materials for homeschoolers abound. Many are home-based businesses of homeschooling families who seek to supplement incomes and provide a service to other homeschoolers.

Popular online independent study programs for K-12 students include:

- Apex Learning (AP classes)
- Bob Jones University
- Brigham Young University
- Georgia Public Television
- Kentucky Educational TV
- University of Nebraska
- Stanford University

As discussed by Lines (2003), an increasing number of public school entities are developing partnerships with homeschoolers, which may take the form of special on-site programs, independent learning programs, including homeschoolers in selected classes and co-curricular activities, and virtual/cyber charter schools. Lines prefers to call participants in these programs enrolled home-based study students.

“Graduation” from a homeschool may or may not be a formal event. Some homeschoolers issue their own diplomas; others work through state-approved organizations that grant diplomas based on evaluation of transcripts and portfolios, and hold their own graduation ceremonies. Some school districts issue diplomas to homeschooled students based on demonstration of having completed state and district requirements. A few homeschooled students take the GED exam, but this is generally not considered a desirable option because of the stigma the GED carries.

Most U.S. colleges and universities accept homeschooled students on the same basis as traditionally-schooled students. College-bound homeschooled students take the SAT or ACT exams, and many also take SAT II, CLEP, and AP exams. Many enter college with credits transferred from college-level courses they have taken during their homeschooling.

Ian Slatter of the Homeschool Legal Defense Association notes that many organizations have expressed interest in working with homeschoolers, but most are "scared off" when they realize that there is not a homogeneous homeschool market. While many organizations such as museums and cultural institutions have organized programs and activities for homeschoolers, national-level disciplinary organizations tend not to address this sector specifically. Most will, however, include a web site section or information targeted toward parents and families; these resources are often utilized by homeschoolers, as are resources directed at educators. I have not been able to identify any disciplinary organization that attempts to engage the homeschool market in ways similar to those GENIP is considering.

Caveat

"Homeschoolers generally have a committed vision for the education of their children and will be suspicious of offers of help" (Lines 2003, 3). While this comment is directed toward public educators considering partnering with homeschooling families, it applies to other groups (such as ours), as well. She notes that "[where] the relation between homeschoolers and professional educators is cordial, there is an opportunity to explore and exchange ideas" on innovations, such as portfolio assessments and electronic distance learning.

3. Sources of Geography Content for Homeschoolers

Homeschoolers use a variety of materials to teach and learn geography. Some are decidedly Christian-focused, while others are materials from secular commercial publishers. Geography Matters and Bright Ideas Press are two home-based companies who publish their own geography materials and sell supplementary products produced by other companies.

How homeschooling families teach/learn geography

More than 70 homeschoolers responded to a questionnaire e-mailed to a number of discussion groups representing an admittedly incomplete cross-section of the homeschool community. Telephone or in-person interviews with five additional homeschool families offered further insight into how homeschoolers are teaching, learning, and doing geography. Many respondents expressed sincere appreciation that geographers are interested in learning about and working with homeschoolers.⁸ Following are the strategies they noted, along with some examples.

- **Travel**

A homeschooling mom of 2 elementary-age children and a preschooler wrote, *"When we travel, my husband always makes up binders for the kids with information and pictures about the area we are going through, and some coloring pages or related activities. We try to tie in some literature with our travels if possible too, for instance my sister lives near the Catskills so if we drive up there we'll bring along some Washington Irving stories, a trip to Chincoteague would call for the "Misty" books, etc. It's fun to try to find something appropriate for the area you are traveling to."*

A homeschooling mother of 2 high school-age sons wrote, *"We are eclectic borderline unschoolers, so geography, like most subjects, is integrated into our*

⁸ Comments included *"thanks for your curiosity!!"; "Thank you for taking the time to post to our group"; "As for the professional community interacting with homeschoolers, it is refreshing to see someone taking the time to try"*

day. We spent 7 months last "school year" traveling around the US, and the boys gained skill in using an atlas, climbed natural structures in the bad lands, ... went down into Carlsbad Caverns and Canyon de Chelly, viewed old faithful and the grand canyon, etc. It was the best geography resource ever. Especially since one boy took environmental science merit badge at camp just before we left, and the other took it soon after we got home. Now they lay on the floor under the map [or drape themselves on the furniture] and study the map, saying things like, "hey, remember when we were in Pierre, SD?" So it goes on..."

- **Maps, atlases, and globes**

A homeschooling mom of 3 primary-age students wrote, "For the past 2 years, geography was a separate subject. We did very simple bi-weekly lessons covering our town, county, state, region and country. We made maps of our house, street, area, town and figured out ways to get from here to there using maps. I have a huge world atlas, several children's atlases and maps from every state we have ever been to. The 2 oldest [ages 6 and 8] can read and navigate using maps very well. This year geography is getting lumped in with history as we are spending the whole year covering from the Vikings to 1700 as part of the colonization of the U.S. Between the different explorers that made their way here and all of the countries that had a vested interest in colonization to the trade routes for goods, slaves, and settlers-we will have a full year of it. I use several on-line maps sites, 'older' reprint maps I have bought and plenty of books from home and the library."

Another wrote, "We put large maps all around the house. For a long time we had a huge world map in the bathroom. The kids would look at it every time they went to the bathroom and ask a zillion questions."

- **Geography Web sites:** Geography.About.com; NGS Expeditions; CIA World Factbook; USGS; Lonely Planet Destinations
- **Books and magazines:** NGM, NG Kids
- **Computer and electronic games/software, board and card games:** Carmen Sandiego, ZipZapMap, States (old DOS game), GeoSafari
- **Postcard/Flat Traveler exchanges; following missionary activities**

A homeschooling mom of 2 primary-age children and a toddler wrote, "We have a U.S. map on the back door and put stickers on it for each card we receive. We also read the cards and talk about the states."

The homeschooling mother of 4 middle school-age children wrote, "We have many draw on wipe off maps of parts of the world. Our US one is covered with the states marked as we contact other homeschoolers thru this Flat Traveler adventure. We've contacted about 10 states in 5 or so months.... We're active in our church and have a lot of missionaries all over the globe. In our church hall a world map points to where each missionary is located. The kids get some correspondence from them and that country comes alive."

- **National Geographic Bee:** Approximately 15,000 schools and homeschool groups register for the annual National Geographic Bee.⁹ Homeschooled students represent about 2% of those returning qualifying tests, and they perform exceptionally well (Elden 2004). More than half of homeschooled students who return qualifying tests place in the top 100 in their respective states, thus qualifying for the state-level competitions (see Table 3).

Table 4: Homeschooled Students in National Geographic Bee

	Total Qualifying Exam Returned	Homeschool Exams	% of Exams by Hmsch. St.	# Hmsch. St. Qual for State	% Hmsch. St. Qual for State
2004	13,256	282	2.1	162	57.4
2003	13,381	311	2.3	175	56.3
2002	14,551	335	2.3	176	52.5

Source: Elden 2004

"Geographic Bee for sure. Son came in second last year" [level unspecified; family in Florida]

- **Tracking license plates**
The homeschooling mom of 2 primary-age children and a toddler also wrote, *"My husband prints out US maps for the car and the girls color in the states as we see cars with their license plates. When they can't find the states we tell them "It's in the south" or "It's west of Minnesota" to help them find them."*
- **Geography clubs within local homeschool groups**
The homeschooling mother of a 7-year-old 1st-grader wrote, *"Our homeschool coop has a geography club which we attend. All the children make a presentation on the country being studied and share a potluck lunch of food from those countries."*
- **Studies of individual states or countries, including sampling ethnic food, collecting artifacts**
The homeschooling mom of 2 primary-age children and a toddler wrote, *"We focus on one country at a time and learn all about that country. We try to find goods made there, find it on a map, read something with characters set there, do crafts reflecting the area, etc. We always pick out one new food or drink from the ethnic section of the grocery store and then find its country of origin on the map and do taste tests (helpful hint: Grass Jelly Drink is as bad as it sounds!). We collect*

⁹ The competition is open to schools and homeschool groups of at least 6 students in grades 4-8. The winner of each school-level Bee takes a written exam, which is sent to NGS for scoring. Students with the top 100 scores in each state are invited to participate in the state-level competition, and state winners are invited to the National Finals.

musical instruments and other things from around the world, plus we have friends in South Africa, Ireland, Denmark and Scotland who send us letters and presents."

- **Discussions based on books being read**

A mother who just started homeschooling her elementary-age 2 daughters wrote, *"So far we've just slid [geography] in. We are not formally studying it yet, but we are going over a book on the American West. We've gone over the maps, old stuff to my 6th grader, but new to the 3rd grader. Now we are trying to tie in reading books that take place in the Southwest, King's Fifth and the Josefina books. We're also looking at where Lewis and Clark went, and we're looking at the Sante Fe trail. So maybe 2/3rds history and 1/3 geography. When we're done with the west we are starting an older curriculum that also combines history and geography of the old worlds."*

- **Exploring the neighborhood**

The homeschooling mother of 2 high school-age sons wrote, *"When they were younger, one of my favorite resources were a shovel and a drainage ditch. They learned a lot about erosion, water plants and animals, clay and rock (lol), changing routes of water and how they [a]ffect surrounding land."*

- **Community college classes: GIS**

A homeschooling grandmother wrote, *"My older two grandchildren are 14 and 15; they recently took a college level course on GIS use and LIDAR mapping, printing out copies of our 'neighborhood' and the streams and rivers in the area (we live in an area with a real flooding problem). The adults in the class were totally mystified by the software, which the kids said was 'a piece of cake'. There was a second course that they were unable to attend and a whole lot of people in the community were upset, as their "computer specialists" weren't there to help them!"*

4. Homeschoolers' Desiderata for Geography Materials

Recognizing that there is no such thing as "a" homeschool community, it is still possible to make some generalizations about the kinds of resources homeschoolers would like to use to help their children learn geography.

- **Cheap is good; free is better.** Like teachers in traditional schools, many homeschoolers actively seek resources that are available free online or at their local libraries: *"We always love free lesson plans, resources and so on."* On the other hand, many homeschoolers will and do purchase materials and services that they perceive to be valuable. A web site that is available by subscription/enrollment only would probably not do well, but individual components or different levels of service could be available for a fee.

- **Maps are our friends.** When asked what strategies homeschoolers use to help their children learn geography, posting maps around the house comes up most frequently. Homeschoolers want access to maps, including outline maps (hard copy and CD-format) that can be copied and used for a variety of activities. One homeschooler writes, *"I'd like to see some lesson plans that include printable blank maps."* A homeschooling mom whose father was a cartographer/archivist at Woods Hole (*"so maps are a must..."*) wrote, *"One idea I've pondered is to compare nautical charts, political maps, aerospace/pilot charts, topographical maps for my kids to understand the differences...I can't locate any teaching material already created and it'll be costly to make my own; BUT, I'd still like to do it."* Sound like EarthKAM, anyone?

In some cases, maps are just the introduction to an in-depth discussion of the "whys of where," while in other cases, maps may be the sum-total of the family's treatment of geography. Which leads us to...

- **What is human geography?** When asked if their children were planning to take any AP exams, several homeschoolers responded simply, *"What is Human Geography?"* A homeschooling mom with a PhD in anthropology, whose husband is a GIS professional and ABD in geography, noted in an interview, *"There's a lack of understanding among the general population about what geography really is, and a need to educate people about that."* Therefore, it will be important to educate visitors to GENIP's online presence about geography's scope and diversity using language and examples that are accessible and relevant to everyday life.
- **Bring on the dancing horsts** Well, not literally (-:-). A homeschooling mom of an ADD 7th-grader is "searching for creative ways to spark her interest."
- **Connections to literature.** A homeschooling mother of 3 primary-age children wrote, *"It would be nice to have a series of books (and they may exist) that take a child from each country/region, etc. and have them tell a story in their own words about where they live and how that area came to be what it is..."* Such books do, indeed exist, and have since the 1930s in the works of Frances Carpenter.
- **What about the little ones?** As Lydia Lewis has long advocated, good materials for primary-age students are hard to find; the sentiment is echoed by homeschoolers.
- **Girl Power:** A homeschooling mother whose children participated in the local and state levels of the National Geographic Bee would like to see more materials designed to capture girls' interest in geography.

- **Bring back Carmen Sandiego.** A former National Geographic Bee winner who now attends college wrote, *"I'd like to see more quality software for geography. I actually loved playing "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?" as a kid. I played the "old" version, which had a lot of tough geography. I simply looked up the answers I didn't know in an atlas or something, and really learned a lot."*
- **"Take A Homeschool Student to Work" Day.** Perhaps not literally, but homeschooling parents and their students would like to interact with geographers. Suggestions include having geographers meet with homeschool groups in their area to talk about topics of interest, geography careers, help create geography clubs/Bees, lead field trips. A homeschooling mother of high school-age sons would like to see mentoring, *"by mail or e-mail, or take on a homeschooled teen as an apprentice. I bet it would be mutually satisfying."*

5. Opportunities for Geography in Homeschool America: Some Recommendations

An online presence for homeschoolers--and other interested parties--will offer GENIP the opportunity to showcase and promote existing materials prepared by its constituent groups, to review and suggest external resources, and to develop new educational resources that fill perceived gaps in teaching, learning, and "doing" geography. For lack of a better term, I will call this proposed online presence the "GENIP Clearinghouse."

We need to think about how the GENIP Clearinghouse will be different from existing resources. One way is to customize the environment so as to welcome homeschoolers and acknowledge the diversity of homeschooling approaches. For example, a series of vignettes could tell the stories of how families using different homeschooling approaches "do" geography and what resources they use to do it. By extension, similar vignettes can demonstrate how other audiences (e.g., traditional schools, charter schools, families in general) can benefit from the site.

Another important feature will be to connect geography content and activities to everyday life. Many homeschoolers are committed integrators, discussing various subjects as they come up, with tangents of interest leading to further study.

It may make sense to have multiple levels of service available from the GENIP Clearinghouse. Some content should be freely available to all interested parties, but families who enroll/subscribe could be entitled to a downloadable "welcome packet" and access to a restricted area with more specialized content (e.g., curriculum materials, question answering, online classes).

Content Components

- **Activities and Learning Opportunities:** The Clearinghouse should offer curriculum materials and suggestions for lessons, activities, unit studies, field studies, and field trips, organized by age group, topic, and learning style. Materials would be drawn from standards-based lesson plans and projects of GENIP's constituent organizations. A form on the review page could invite suggestions for additional learning opportunities to be included.
- **Assessments:** The Clearinghouse could include existing assessments (e.g., NCGE's Intermediate- and Secondary-Level Geography Tests), as well as performance-based assessments.
- **Resource Reviews & Links:** The Clearinghouse should review and promote existing resources produced by GENIP's constituent organizations, and should review and link to geography resources produced by external organizations and companies. Such resources may include textbooks, geography-related fiction and nonfiction books, atlases, games, software, and web sites. It may be advantageous to include reviews of sectarian (i.e., Christian- or other religiously-focused) publications and products in a separately marked section, as such resources are widely used among Christian/religious homeschoolers. A form on the review page could invite suggestions for additional publications/products to be included.
- **Discussion Forum:** The Clearinghouse should include a listserv or discussion boards for both parents and students to share their ideas, experiences, and best practices. Clearinghouse staff could use these as evidenced by the plethora of Yahoo!Groups on homeschooling topics, homeschoolers are eager to connect with each other on topics of interest.
- **Assistance in Answering Questions:** The Clearinghouse should have an "Ask the Geographer" section for help on geographic questions. Clearinghouse staff could give priority to enrolled/subscribed participants and develop an "FAQ" list for general consumption, while geographers and geography grad/undergrad students could volunteer to answer questions or discuss their careers and professional interests as part of the discussion forum.
- **Information on Individual and Group Competitions and Programs:** The Clearinghouse should have information on opportunities for homeschooled students to develop and showcase their knowledge of geography through individual and group competitions and programs. Homeschooled students perform exceedingly well in the National Geographic Bee for middle school students and the AAA Travel High School Challenge,¹⁰ and they are eager to

¹⁰ The American Automobile Association (AAA) offered a Travel Challenge for public, private, and homeschooled students in grades 9-12 in 2003 and 2004; it has not yet been determined if the competition will run in 2005 (AAA 2004). At least David Beihl of Saluda, SC won second place in 2003; Joshua

learn of additional opportunities. In addition to the Bee and AAA Travel Challenge (if the latter continues to function), many homeschoolers would likely be interested in NCGE's National Geography Challenge.¹¹ Many homeschoolers participate in "Flat Traveler" (paper critters passed among interested parties, based on the book *Flat Stanley*) and postcard exchanges, often facilitated via Yahoo!Groups. This section of the Clearinghouse could link to such groups and could also showcase homeschool geography clubs.

- **Regular Features:** The Clearinghouse should have regularly updated feature articles, which may include:
 - A monthly GENIP column about what is happening in geography education
 - Monthly feature stories about homeschooling families "doing" geography
 - A weekly feature akin to "Geography in the News" to make connections between geography and current events
- **Online Classes:** Although few homeschool students have taken the AP Human Geography Exam,¹² many are enrolling in classes for high school or college credit, through either online or traditional instruction (e.g., community college, virtual charter schools, independent study programs).

Getting the Word Out

- Advertise through web sites, listservs, and newsletters of local and regional homeschool associations. Although compiling such lists is a daunting task, the grassroots nature of the homeschooling movement suggests that communication vehicles of local and regional groups are the best way to reach homeschoolers.
- Advertise in national homeschooling web sites, magazines, and newsletters with feature stories as well as display-type ads. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is by far the largest and most powerful national organization, claiming to represent about 80% of homeschooling families.

Baumgartner of San Antonio, TX won first place in 2004; and Tommy Beihl of Saluda, SC won second place in 2004.

¹¹ The National Geography Challenge is a school-based competition for students in grades 2-12 in which 750-1,000 schools participate annually. The total number of test-takers is estimated at 50,000 for 2004; it is impossible to accurately determine the exact number of student participants because a single fee (\$70 for 2004) applies to all test-takers at the same grade level per school. Jim Marran notes that "[b]ecause the Challenge is a classroom-based competition, it is not likely that it would have much appeal to the home schoolers except to take a test for its own sake. Perhaps the publisher would consider a home schooling rate and organize that group as a separate category" (Marran 2004). Based on my research, I believe that homeschool groups or geography clubs would be interested in participating if a separate category for homeschoolers were established.

¹² Anecdotal evidence suggests that few homeschoolers are aware that such an exam exists; many have never heard of "human geography" as a subject. In 2004, only 6 of 10,471 students who took the APHG exam were homeschooled; of AP exams in all subjects, 849 were taken by homeschooled students (Hildebrant 2004).

- Advertise at homeschool conferences through bag inserts, as well as booths at larger conferences.
- Advertise at state geography bees, which will reach traditional as well as homeschooled students and teachers.

Caveats

- Some homeschoolers will be put off by talk of standards, outcome-based education, educationese, geo-jargon, and anything federally mandated, sponsored or supported. All of the Clearinghouse's original content should be standards-based and perhaps correlated, but titles need not be blatant about it.
- Many but not all homeschoolers do not believe in evolution, although at least some do cover it as a theory to be aware of (but not believed). It may be wise to note somewhere within the Clearinghouse which resources represent strictly secular (i.e., evolutionist) viewpoints.
- We should take care to emphasize how geography integrates with other subjects and with everyday life, and how the study and learning of geography can help children make sense of their world.

Additional Audiences

The resources GENIP pulls together should appeal to adherents of a variety of educational approaches, from traditional public/private schools to unschoolers. While recognizing that it is impossible to be all things to all people, the clearinghouse could have several portals/introductory pages that explain and categorize the content based on the various approaches.

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Selected National Homeschool Organizations

- American Homeschool Association (AHA) – Palmer, AK
<http://www.americanhomeschoolassociation.org>
- Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) – Purcellville, VA
<http://www.hslda.org>
- National Black Home Educators Resource Association (NBHERA) – Baker, LA
<http://www.nbhera.org>
- National Challenged Homeschoolers Associated Network (NATHHAN) – Porthill, ID
<http://www.nathhan.com/>
- National Home Education Network (NHEN) – Long Beach, CA
<http://www.nhen.org>
- National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) – Salem, OR
<http://www.nheri.org>

Informal, Open-Ended Questionnaire Sent to 30 Yahoo!Discussion Groups:

Hi, all--

I'm Jodi Vender from Havertown, PA. I'm mom to a 1-year-old daughter, and haven't yet decided what approach to schooling we're going to take. I'm also a geographer, finishing a PhD at Penn State; I used to work at the National Geographic Society; still do geography education consulting and coordinate the PA state geography bee.

I've done a lot of reading about homeschooling, attended a hs conference earlier this summer, and am participating in a number of discussion lists to get a sense of what's going on with various approaches to homeschooling.

I'm working with the Geography Education National Implementation Project (GENIP- see <http://genip.tamu.edu>) to learn about how homeschoolers are "doing" geography, and what resources they'd like to see to help teach and learn geography.

I'm extremely interested in discussing--via this list or privately--the following topics (or others I may not have thought of):

*where or how geography fits into your child's school day; is it a separate subject for you? what resources do you use?

*how you define geography (subject of much debate even among geographers!)

*what other geography resources you're aware of, even if you haven't used them

*if your children are planning to take any Advanced Placement tests, are you aware that there's now an exam for Human Geography?

* what kinds of geography resources you'd like to see/use to help you do geography with your children

*how you think the community of professional geographers could/should interact with homeschoolers

In return, I'll be happy to share a list of some of my favorite geography resources and/or try to answer questions you might have.

Thanks in advance for sharing,

Jodi