

**HOME SCHOOLING WORKS—Pass it on!**

**Online Press Conference—March 23, 1999, 12:00pm EST**

***Transcript of chat session with media***

**Moderator says** If you have a question, type a question mark

**DJones says** ?

**Moderator says** DJone, you question?

**Moderator says** DJones has the floor

**loconnor says** ?

**DJones says** Mr. Farris in light of this study what are your plans for future action by Home School Legal Defense Assoc.?

**Mike Farris says** We will continue to monitor state and federal legislation which impacts home schoolers. We believe that our good academic performance warrants greater freedoms even though every year the education establishment attempts to curtail our freedoms in a significant number of states.

**Moderator says** Loconnor your next

**loconnor says** Where did you get the people who participated in this study? DONE.

**Moderator says** Larry, can you answer this?

**Larry Rudner says** These were families that contracted with Bob Jones University's testing program.DONE

**Moderator says** Next question?

**loconnor says** ?

**Moderator says** loconnor, go ahead

**loconnor says** I read somewhere in your study that there was a large group of people with some religious affiliation that volunteered en masse. how did that happen and doesn't it skew your study?

**Larry Rudner says** Yes there was a large representation of Independ Fundamentalists and Baptists

**Moderator says** Next question?

**loconnor says** ?

**Larry Rudner says** None DONE

**Moderator says** Loconnor, go ahead

**Mike Farris says** The study was done with the largest testing service for home schoolers of any kind. The survey instrument was included with the testing materials.

**nmitchell says** “?”

**DJones says** ?

**anazareno says** how were children selected for this study?

**loconnor says** wouldn't it have been a stronger piece of research if you had randomized the participants?

**Moderator says** Loconnor has the floor

**nmitchell says** How were the families selected that participated in the program? "done"

**ataylor says** is there some legal threat to home schooling as an option

**Moderator says** PLEASE TYPE A QUESTION MARK TO BE RECOGNIZED

**Larry Rudner says** To loconnor - I would rather have studied a random sample of 3,000 students. Unfortunately that is not possible. We don't have a well defined universe of home school students from which to draw a random sample. The fact that this was a large sample assures accurate estimates. DONE

**anazareno says** ?

**Mike Farris says** Ataylor, I will answer your question now.

**ataylor says** is there some legal threat to home schooling

**loconnor says** ?

**anazareno says** How were children selected for the study? "done"

**Mike Farris says** There are threats to home school freedoms in legislatures every year. This year is no exception. We see bills introduced which attempt to place greater restrictions on home schooling and we have several thousand legal conflicts with school officials every year.

**Mike Farris says** Done

**Moderator says** nmitchell, you are next

**nmitchell says** My question is the same as others and I do not feel it's been adequately answered. How were families selected for this study? "done"

**sarcher says** ?

**Larry Rudner says** Parents self selected to have their children tested by Bob Jones University Testing Program. DONE

**Mike Farris says** The children were not selected in the traditional sense of random selection. This is a complete report on all testing results done with the largest group of home schoolers in the country. It is akin to the results you see when a large school district reports the scores of all students in the district.

**DJones says ?**

**Moderator says** Djones you are next

**anazareno says ?**

**DJones says** Are you planning to continue following this group as they age?

**CEdwards says ?**

**Larry Rudner says** Longitudinal studies are difficult and expensive. We can gather very useful info following repeated cross-sectional studies as is usually done by state and local testing programs. DONE

**Moderator says** Anazareno, you are next

**nmitchell says ?**

**anazareno says** Mr. Rudner , If the parents self -select, can the test be representative of the home school students? done

**Mike Farris says** The study did not gather longitudinal data. We will consider a longitudinal study at a later date. I think, however, one of the most important findings in the study is that students who were home schooled all of their lives do better than students who have gone from institutional schools to home schools.

**Mike Farris says** Done.

**Larry Rudner says** I only claim to generalize to groups like the one Studied. There is nothing to indicate that the group is atypical. The fact that it was large assures good estimates. DONE

**loconnor says ?** i didn't see a lot of difference between the results of this study and the one brian ray did a couple of years ago. what changes do you notice? DONE.

**CEdwards says** Have there been any studies done on homeschooling by the public sector? Done

**Mike Farris says** it is impossible to do a representative sampling of home schoolers. There is simply no group from which they may be selected. The best that can be done is to report the findings of all those who take a certain test. They were not aware of the study when they initially contacted the testing service. We contacted them when they were receiving their test materials.

**Moderator says** Loconnor, you are next

**Mike Farris says** Done

**ataylor says ?**

**loconnor says ?**

**Mike Farris says** The results are generally consistent with Brian Ray's prior study. But there are strengths to this study that Brian's didn't have. More

**Moderator says** Sarcher, you are next

**loconnor says ?**

**Moderator says** Hold your thought Sarcher

**CEdwards says** ?

**Moderator says** Let Mike Farris finish his first

**Mike Farris says** First, Brian is a home schooler, Larry Rudner is not. Second, there were multiple kinds of tests in Brian's study, in this one there was only one kind of test increasing its reliability. Third, this one was peer reviewed by additional independent researchers. We instructed Dr. Rudner to make the study as critic-proof as possible. We think that has been achieved.

**anazareno says** ?

**Mike Farris says** DOne

**Moderator says** Sarcher, go ahead

**sarcher says** What accounts for the 5.1 % of the homeschoolers who are one grade behind their public and private school counterparts? Done

**Moderator says** In my queue, I have cedwards, nmitchell, ataylor, oconnor, cedwards, anazareno... I get to you

**Mike Farris says** This means that they are some low achievers in home schooling. it is a much smaller percentage than in public schools. Home schoolers don't live in Lake Wobegon where ALL of the children are above average, Done

**Larry Rudner says** There are always children behind in their grade. 5% does not seem like alot to me. I suspect these are children who were doing poorly in school and their parents are attempting to compensate.  
DONE

**Moderator says** Cedwards, you are nesxt

**Moderator says** next

**loconnor says** ? why are home schoolers predominately white protestants? DONE.

**Moderator says** We'll get to you loconnor, cedwards has the floor

**Larry Rudner says** Beyomd my study. Done

**CEdwards says** Have there been any publcially funded studies on home schooling and how do homeschoolers compare to private (not nec Catholic school) students?

**Mike Farris says** Yes, there have been public studies done on home schooling. Brian Ray of NHERI ([www.nheri.org](http://www.nheri.org)) has recently published a review of the research. The results are consistent with this study only much smaller in size and usually without the demographic analysis done.

**Mike Farris says** DOne

**CEdwards says** and the second part of the question re: private schools?

**Larry Rudner says** I know of no studies comparing home school students to private school students. We compared home schools to private/catholic as those were the available norms. There are few "public sector" studies regarding home schooling. The National Center for Educational Statistics will be issuing a technical report in a few weeks regarding the number of Home school students. ACT reports home school ACT test results. There are a few small studies by local districts. But not much. Done

**Mike Farris says** I am unaware of any publicly funded studies comparing home schoolers to private school students. Done

**Moderator says** nmitchell, you are next

**nmitchell says** If parents self-select, aren't you concerned you only got parents who believed their children would do well? If such self-selection were allowed in a large school district, don't you think the results would certainly be higher than when all students were tested? Critics will certainly point to this as a fundamental weakness of the study.

**Larry Rudner says** They self selected before they knew the scores. Many tested to meet state testing requirements. Done.

**loconnor says** ?

**sarcher says** ?

**Mike Farris says** If this study were inconsistent with other studies, then this criticism might be more valid. In many prior studies parents knew the results before they agreed to participate. This study improves the problem with self-selection but cannot fully cure the critics. However, we need to recognize that the nature of home schooling makes compulsory participation in a study impossible.

**Moderator says** Ataylor, you are next

**ataylor says** do you think the study will affect the "harassment" home school families experience? "done"

**Mike Farris says** We hope that it will help judges and public policy makers make better decisions about our freedoms. But I do not expect public school officials to be dissuaded from their attempts. They are not harassing us for the good of the students. Done.

**Moderator says** Loconnor, you are next

**loconnor says** if the parents administered tests, how do you know they didn't help their children with the answers? DONE.

**Mike Farris says** The controls placed by the testing company preclude parents from giving their own children the tests unless the parents were monitoring a larger group of students which included their own child. Done

**Larry Rudner says** Ideally, I would have preferred an independent, contracted, third party to administer the tests. That is not practical. I didn't happen with the home school students in our study; it doesn't happen with public or private schools. I should add that all test administrators in our study were qualified by the testing company (more)

**loconnor says** ?

**Larry Rudner says** and signed affidavits that they adhered to the testing protocol. DONE

**nmitchell says ?**

**Moderator says** Anazereno, you are next

**anazareno says** How were parents solicited for the study? Did you solicit from lists at statewide education departments? Did you select from your organization's membership? Done

**Larry Rudner says** We did not solicit. The parents contracted with BJU for testing services. We analyzed the data. DONE

**Larry Rudner says** Also

**Mike Farris says** They signed up to have their children tested. We were able to get the testing company to enclose the study materials in the return packet which included the tests. The students took the tests and returned the study instrument simultaneously.

**abillups says ?**

**Larry Rudner says** Most states do not have good lists of home school children (DONE)

**Moderator says** Loconnor, you are next

**loconnor says** why use bob jones testing rather than ETS or some other non-religious (and nationally recognized) testing service? DONE.

**Mike Farris says** ETS doesn't operate a service for home schoolers. The tests were actually scored by Psych Corp in San Antonio. Done.

**Larry Rudner says** No Mike. They were scored by Riverside who owns the ITBS. (done)

**Moderator says** Sarcher, you are next

**sarcher says** Does the \$400/year/home-schooled child include books that are needed? Books alone can cost that much. Done

**Mike Farris says** Oops. Same principle different company. These tests were scored by the same people who test and score public school children. Bob Jones is merely the sales point for home school children. The publishers of tests do not want to deal directly with home schoolers. Done

**anazareno says ?**

**Larry Rudner says** It included all instructional material including books. The range was big, Many spent more than \$800 done

**Mike Farris says** Yes, the \$400 includes books. My own family has home schooled for 17 years. We have never spent that much per child. Done.

**Moderator says** Loconnor. you are next

**loconnor says ?**

**Moderator says** Loconnor, you have the floor

**loconnor says** mike, i would like to know why you think home schoolers are so overwhelmingly white and protestant. DONE.

**Mike Farris says** Ok

**loconnor says** ?

**Mike Farris says** There is a certain lifestyle that is attracted to home schooling. it takes two parents. it takes a commitment for one parent to leave a full time job. More

**ataylor says** ?

**Mike Farris says** There is a strong belief among evangelicals that moms belong at home with their children. This has to be one factor on the religious count. Home schooling is probably more white in part because racial minorities may not be able to make it when one parent foregoes an income. Done.

**Moderator says** Nmittchell, you are next

**nmittchell says** How did families learn about the testing so they could contract with BJU?

**Mike Farris says** This testing service is well known in the home school community. There are also commercial ads placed by BJU in many home school publications and conferences. DOne

**Moderator says** Abillups, you are next

**abillups says** How much did this study cost. Who paid?

**Mike Farris says** HSLDA paid for the study. The cost was approx \$35k.

**Moderator says** Anazareno, you are next

**anazareno says** Three questions: What did Psych Corp do?; The state of Florida is discussing publicly funded vouchers for private schools, have you and your parent members discussed eventually getting voucher money? and do you think there are many racial minority homeschoolers who didn't participate in study?

**abillups says** ?

**Larry Rudner says** I will do the first, Mike can you do the 2nd and 3rd

**Mike Farris says** Riverside (not Pysch Corp--my mistake earlier) published the tests and wholesaled them to BJU. BJU retailed the tests to home schoolers. Home schoolers sent the tests to BJU. BJU bundled the tests and sent them to Riverside for computer scoring. Riverside produced the results and mailed them to BJU which then sent them to the families. More

**Larry Rudner says** The Riverside technical support department answered many of my questions and prepared the achievement datatapes. National Computer Systems entered the questionnaire/background data. I analyzed the statistics. Done #1

**Mike Farris says** HSLDA opposes vouchers for home schoolers because we believe that with government money we get government strings. We favor certain forms of tax credits but not vouchers. Incidentally, I won one of the three cases in the US Supreme Court which makes it clear that the inclusion of religious schools in educational choice plans does not violate the establishment Clause. Done.

**Moderator says** Loconnor, you are next

**loconnor says** mike, in the last study, florida was ranked as "moderate regulation" of home schoolers. in your opinion has florida improved or deteriorated since then (in terms of regulation, harassment, access etc.)? DONE.

**Mike Farris says** it has remained constant in Florida. There are more regulations in Florida than in many other states. More (on the prior question) coming.

**anazareno says** ? how about the question of racial minorities?

**Mike Farris says** My best guess is that this study's percentage of racial minorities is fairly representative of the home schooling community. There are probably 5 to 10% of home schoolers who are members of such minorities. Done.

**Moderator says** Ataylor, you are next

**loconnor says** ?

**ataylor says** Did demographic information include race and religious or non-religious background? And why would it a racial minority not be able to make it when one parent foregoes an income as compared to a white person, since the group surveyed has a median of about \$50 000 anyway?And what minorities were you referring to in the last answer? "done"

**Mike Farris says** I was simply reflecting on the fact that it is generally recognized that there are greater percentages of those from racial minorities whose family incomes fall below the median. That is only one factor in the equation. A minority family with \$50k family income can "make it" just as well as a white family. Family income is only one factor in this phenomenon. I cannot guess as to other reasons which have to be a part of the rationale. DOne.

**Moderator says** Abillups, you are next

**abillups says** Mr. Rudner, what if anything most surprised you as an educator and non-home schooler about your findings?

**anazareno says** ?

**ataylor says** ? there were other parts to that question not answered

**Mike Farris says** I will add to my answer to Ataylor after this one to Rudner.

**Larry Rudner says** The magnitude of the median achievement levels. In terms of group differences, (ide. income, parented) there were no surprises. Done.

**Mike Farris says** We gathered demographic data on all responders including race and religion. Does that answer your question? Done.

**ataylor says** yes. but I also asked what minorities groups responded Mike Farris says Larry can you answer that?

**Larry Rudner says** White (94%), hispanic (.2), black (.8%), american indian (2.4%) and asian (1.2%) done

**Moderator says** Loconnor, you are next

**loconnor says** what percentage of school age children are homeschooled? is this up or down since your last study? DONE.

**Larry Rudner says** Pat Lines issued a report. I remember it was less than 5%. maybe 1.3% and the number is rising. Nat Ctr for Ed -

**Mike Farris says** We did not attempt to compute the numbers of home schoolers in this study. All independent factors point to a strong continued growth. State registrations (where required) are up. Book sales are up. Our membership is up. Home school publication subscriptions are up. My best estimate is a 10%-15% growth each year. Done.

**Larry Rudner says** Statistics will be issuing a report based on the National Household Education Suirvey and the Current Popultation Suirvey in a few weeks. Done

**Moderator says** Anazareno, you are next

**anazareno says** Couple of questions: Dr. Rudner , have you home schooled? and Did the survey also include questions about why parents homeschooled? If so what was the result, if not, in best guess, why? Are programs - public, private - not religious enough? Are they wanting to isolate children from "bad" influences? Do parents not trust outside educators to adequately impart values and knowledge? DONE

**Larry Rudner says** 1) Home schooling is not for my wife and 1. Our children are in wonderful public schools.

**Larry Rudner says** 2) We did not get into causuality or reasons at all. Mike may be anle to answer why. I certainly cannot. done

**Mike Farris says** Parents home school for a great number of reasons. Some common reasons: (a) concern about academic performance in public school. (b) physical safety of children in public school (c) lack of affirmative instruction in traditional moral values in public school (d) desire to impart religious instruction and values (e) a belief that children are not well served by spending abundant time with their peers. Done. loconnor says ?

**Moderator says** Next question?

**Moderator says** Loconnor, you are next

**loconnor says** larry, were you surprised by any of the information in this study?

**Larry Rudner says** Over all achievement level was the only surprise. done

**Moderator says** Next question?

**anazareno says** ? M. Ferris, but there are growing numbers of private religious programs of all types? why not send children to those?

**Mike Farris says** Money is one factor. But I believe that my own family's reason is fairly typical. Even in private religious schools children spend most of their time with other children. And in this scenario children get their values from other children. Even in Christian schools this is not ideal. My wife and I have found that we have a better understanding of values than do 6 year olds-- even in Chirstian schools (We tried this with our oldest daughter.) We involved our children with other kids but not

**Mike Farris says** more

**Mike Farris says** with the same degree of intensity as in the public schools. Done

**Moderator says** Next question?

**nmitchell says** ?

**Moderator says** NMitchell, go ahead

**nmitchell says** What do you hope is the result of this study's publication? And, why do you believe public school officials harass home-school families?

**Mike Farris says** We hope to increase the reliability of the impression that home schools are doing well academically. There are many studies out there. It is my opinion that this one stands up best under the kind of cross examination we can potentially face in court when we use such studies. More

**Mike Farris says** Public school officials harass home schooling for a number of reasons. I need to say that the percentage of those harassing home schoolers has diminished over the years. But the reasoning for those who do are: (a) institutional pride (b) a desire to collect the \$6000 a year that child may represent in revenue and (c) a genuine (but misguided in my opinion) belief that the child would be better off in public school. Done

**Moderator says** Dr. Rudner, did you have thoughts on this question?

**loconnor says** ?

**Moderator says** Loconnor, you are next

**loconnor says** Do you have any research on what happens to home school children after home-schooling and/or post-secondary education? what jobs do they end up in, for instance? DONE.

**Larry Rudner says** While Mike thinks there are a lot of studies on home schooling, I think there are few of high scientific quality. As a researcher I am glad to be able to contribute to this growing body of knowledge and provide an independent perspective. I am not making a career of studying home schooling. Done

**Mike Farris says** There are some studies on this. Brian Ray would be a resource. [www.nheri.org](http://www.nheri.org) - My recollection is that home schoolers go to college on about the same percentages as public school students. Done. But more on Larry's last comment...

**Larry Rudner says** A follow up on graduates would be an interesting study. DONE

**Mike Farris says** I agree with Larry that many of the prior studies have been of poor construct. But, there was one done on the life experience of home school graduates that a group of college professors (quite independent) did that I think is pretty well respected. Done.

**Moderator says** Next question?

**Mike Farris says** I think we have exhausted the questions. Larry and I will be available independently if you find a need to follow up. Thanks for attendings.

**Mike Farris says** And thanks for overlooking typos in a chat session. Done.