

Lab. 1 Readings

Reading I: Home Schooling

1 Home schooling is a dramatically increasing educational trend in the United States. A current U.S. census report indicates that about two million children are currently home schooled and that this number is growing between 15-20 percent each year. This tremendous increase in home schooling has many parents, educators and researchers contemplating issues such as why so many people are choosing this educational option, what exactly home schooling is, and what effects home schooling will have on the current educational system.

Why they do it.

2 Typically, parents who choose home schooling *cite* religious motivations, academic concerns or a combination of both as their reasons for moving away from traditional educational practices. For some parents, education, morality and religion are closely connected and they want to *infuse* course content with a particular religious belief. These parents often object to the content of certain educational units, such as a science unit on Darwin's Origin of the Species. Instead, they wish to teach religious texts, a practice prohibited in public schools due to the separation of church and state instituted by the founding fathers of our country.

3 Other parents are motivated by academic concerns. They often feel their children simply aren't challenged by class content. They may also have other curricular issues such as students not having access to foreign languages at an early age, or not gaining genuine multicultural knowledge necessary for functioning in today's shrinking world. These parents may also object to a "state-approved" curriculum which, in their opinion, is designed to encourage students to work in business and industry in order to support and promote the capitalist economy in the U.S. They may view schools as systems for producing like-minded workers instead of free thinking individuals.

Guidelines and Restrictions

4 Whatever their reasons, parents who choose home schooling have many guidelines and restrictions they must follow. Each state has particular statutes that outline these guidelines and restrictions, but most include mandatory information such as names and addresses of both home school students and teachers, a list of classes offered, enrollment by grades, and records of attendance and grades earned. Each state also lists a minimum of instructional hours as well as *core* subjects which must be mastered at each grade level.

Home Schooling Methods

5 Parents who home school also have a variety of methods and resources to support instruction. Some well-known methods include The Classical Education Method, a Christian based curriculum developed by Dorothy Sayers and the Montessori Method, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, which considers learning to be a natural, selfdirected process. Parents who use the Traditional or School-at-Home Method follow the style of public schools in terms of curriculum, grading and record keeping. Finally, some parents use the Eclectic Home schooling Method which combines aspects of several different methods to create an individualized teaching philosophy. In addition to these methods, parents also have many home schooling resources such as Internet websites, home schooling journals and even home schooling conferences to help them become successful teachers.

Concerns About Home Schooling

6 Opponents of home schooling claim that only public schools can provide students with

the *comprehensive* education they will need to be successful, particularly in terms of socialization. To *ensure* proper training and consistent standards, the National Education Association has argued that only licensed teachers should be able to teach in home schools. Educators and researchers also worry about the impact of home schooling on current, public school districts. Since home schoolers don't use public school facilities, they may not support increases in school funding. Additionally, parents who home school may not be important allies with local educational institutions in battles against issues such as standardized testing and teacher credentialing requirements. These worries and concerns, however, may be lost in the continuing rapid growth of the home schooling movement.

Reading II: Learning Communities

1 Where's the bookstore? What if I can't find parking? Which building is my first class in? These are just a few of the questions first-year college students *grapple* with as they begin their studies. And, after attending their classes, these students must find ways to *cope* with understanding the syllabi and course requirements for each class as well as designing a study plan, determining General Education requirements and eventually declaring a major. Recently, college educators and administrators have worked to implement plans to help first-year college students become more successful. Of these plans, learning communities seem to be one of the best options for supporting students.

Learning Community Models

2 Learning communities are made up of groups of students who register for the same classes and study the same topics together. There are three models that community colleges and four-year universities usually use as a basis for their programs. In a Linked or Paired Course model, students co-register in two related courses such as an English 100 class and a Psychology 101 class. Each course fulfills the General Education requirement, is taught by separate professors, and usually has some shared assignments and projects. The Learning Cluster model is more elaborate, with students co-registering for a cluster of two - four courses. These courses may be *linked* by common themes such as "American Industrialism", common historical periods such as "the 1960s" or common issues such as "Gender Rights." There are usually some shared assignments, but there may also be students in the courses who are not part of the learning community and are not co-enrolled in the entire cluster. Finally, the Coordinated Studies Program is the most connected of all learning communities models. This model is a multidisciplinary, multi-course program of faculty and students and all courses have shared assignments. Only students who are co-enrolled as part of the learning community participate in these classes.

How LCs Work

3 Many universities such as Purdue and the University of South Florida, as well as community colleges such as Maricopa have instituted learning community programs. The Freshman Success program at San Diego State University is an excellent example of a Coordinated Studies Program. In this program, first-year students enroll in a core General Education course such as Political Science 101 or American History. They also co-enroll in an English course which uses content from their GE course as a *basis* for writing. In addition to these two courses, the students are enrolled in a study group, led by a peer tutor, for their G. E. class as well as a University seminar. The University seminar is taught by another faculty member who acts as a mentor not only during the students' first semester, but also throughout the students' studies at the college.

4 *Implementation* of learning community models requires extensive cooperation and collaboration from many parts of the college. First, faculty from a variety of disciplines must be willing to work together to create cohesive, meaningful curriculum. Campus schedulers must work with a variety of departments to coordinate course offerings for learning community students and instructors. Academic advisors and student affairs staff must be knowledgeable about the program in order to advise and place students within appropriate learning communities. Finally, students must be willing to participate in learning communities programs, which often are dramatically different from their past educational experiences.

5 If so much work and coordination is necessary for the success of learning communities, why do institutions continue to offer them? The reason is the benefits of learning communities far outweigh any organizational or logistical problems. Learning communities provide students with opportunities to have more on-going intellectual interaction with professors and create a meaningful context for the teaching of critical reading and writing. In learning communities students can make connections across disciplines. And, as studies show, students in learning communities are more motivated, have a higher course completion rate, and develop faster intellectually than other students. As recognition of these benefits increases, the traditional college classroom may become a relic of the past.

Reading III: Internet Shopping

1 Tired of looking for parking places at busy malls? Frustrated by inefficient service at your favorite store? Too busy during your work week to even buy groceries? You may want to consider joining the growing group of consumers who shop “on-line” or through the Internet. The **Internet**, also known as the **World Wide Web**, has become an extremely competitive yet convenient marketplace for all kinds of consumers. The Internet links computer information and web pages from many kinds of companies to create a **virtual shopping mall**, a mall shoppers can access through their computers in the privacy of their homes twenty four hours a day. The Internet can be accessed through an **Internet Service Provider (ISP)** such as America On-Line. After gaining access, shoppers can type in the *URL* or Internet address of the web page they would like to shop from and can begin to make their purchases.

2 Many types of goods are available through the Internet. People can order clothing, furniture, books, jewelry, music and even groceries on-line. **On-line merchants** companies which sell goods through the Internet- work diligently to make sure the consumer’s buying experience is both simple and fun. For example, people who purchase books through a well-known Internet bookstore called Amazon.com will find that the next time they return to this on-line merchant there will be a *screen* with their name and a list of suggested books based on the types of books they purchased during their last visit. Another on-line clothing store, Lands End, provides a **virtual model** for their customers. When customers visit their site, they can enter information about their height, weight and body type. The web site then generates a computer model and the customers can select specific items of clothing for their virtual models to try on before the customers make any purchases. In addition to these services, on-line merchants often have discount prices, special buys or on-line coupons for their Internet customers.

3 While all of this is attractive, there are some important points that Internet shoppers should be aware of before they make their purchases. Just as there are con artists and

fraudulent companies through the mail, there are also many web scams that unaware shoppers can be fooled by. Probably the most important rule on-line consumers should follow is to only shop with companies with which they are familiar. Most well-known companies produce catalogs and brochures about their merchandise and are *clear* about the physical locations of their companies. For instance, many *major retailers* such as the J.C. Penney Company have facilities in their store where Internet customers can return or exchange the goods they have purchased on-line. Also, most on-line merchants are clear about their cancellation or refund policy which is important for Internet consumers to have in case there are problems with their orders. It is wise to think twice about ordering from a seller in another country or from one that does not have a *physical* location. If there is a problem with either the company or the order, it will be very difficult to resolve it in person.

4 The safest way for Internet shoppers to pay for their purchases is by credit card. This way a customer can always file a dispute with the credit card company should there be a discrepancy between the price the on-line merchant offered on the Internet and the price indicated on the credit card bill. Also, customers can dispute charges that they never made on their cards or charges for items they never received. However, sending information about credit cards at a website or in an e-mail through the Internet makes that information *public* and anyone can have access to it and read it. In a way, using a credit card on the Internet can be like putting your credit card information on a post card.

5 Internet shoppers should make sure their on-line merchant uses a reputable and secure **encryption device** before they send information about their credit cards on line. An encryption device is software that can scramble credit card numbers and personal information while it is transmitted to the company with which a customer is doing business. Only the software that the company has can unscramble the code. This way other people using the Internet can't steal the information. One well-known encryption device is produced by the company Verisign. This is a highly advanced system that can be used on both private and public web sites. They can transmit authentication, validation and payment for companies whose customers use a credit card. This particular encryption device has proven to be very effective. Companies who use it will display its logo on their web site. Another way on-line shoppers can tell if their credit card information is secure is by looking at the software their ISP provides to see if the seller uses an encryption *service*. Some software, such as Netscape Navigator, uses a key symbol to indicate Internet security. When the key symbol on the computer screen becomes whole, the information transmitted is secure. Another ISP software, Internet Explorer, uses a lock graphic. If the information sent is secure, the lock will appear as closed.

6 Two other points are important for Internet shoppers to consider. Shoppers should think twice about the kind of information the Internet seller requests from them. Shoppers should beware if they are asked to give social security numbers or passwords to email or to their ISP to complete a transaction. Also, on-line shoppers should be aware of shipping costs and shipping time. Sometimes it may be cheaper or faster not to order on-line as shipping costs can add up. However, some Internet companies do offer free shipping. Also, the purchases made on-line are covered by the "**Federal Telephone and Mail Order Rule.**" This rule states that the goods and/or services ordered must be delivered in the amount of time promised by the seller from which they were ordered or, if the seller did not state a time, within 30 days. It is a good idea for Internet shoppers to always print out the order and shipping information for any Internet purchase just in case it is needed later.

7 Successful Internet shoppers are the ones who carefully pick their Internet merchants, who understand the policies of those merchants and who check for security on the web site from which they make their purchases. Armed with this advice and a credit card, anyone can have a fun, convenient and creative experience shopping on the Internet.

Reading IV:

THE DOG ATE MY DISK, AND OTHER TALES OF WOE

(PP. 396-399 IN YOUR TEXT!). A NOTES FORM WAS INCLUDED IN YOUR ACCOMPANYING PACKET.