ACCOMMODATIONS IN HOMESCHOOL SETTINGS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

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Ecclesiastes 3:11 He hath made everything beautiful in his time (KJV)
ABSTRACT

Patricia Koelsch Stoudt. ACCOMMODATIONS IN HOMESCHOOL SETTINGS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS. (Under the direction of Judy Shoemaker, School of Education, Liberty University, March, 2012).

This qualitative study was designed to examine how homeschooling parents in Pennsylvania make the determination to engage with public school districts to accommodate the special education needs (SEN) of their children. This phenomenological study used direct interviews with 30 Pennsylvania families who are homeschooling children with SEN. Data were analyzed by using the constant comparative method. The study found that even though Pennsylvania’s law allows families and school districts to work together to provide services to address the children’s SEN, this does not happen often. Most families in this study utilized services from private resources. These private services were paid by insurance or by the families themselves. The results of this study suggest that seeking diagnoses of the SEN by private practitioners was not synonymous with identifying the SEN in documentation to school districts. The results also suggest the key role homeschool evaluators/consultants play in educating and supporting the families, and those families should choose their evaluators carefully. The results of the study may be helpful for homeschooling families, school district personnel, homeschool evaluators/consultants, homeschool cooperative group leaders, and special education teachers.

Descriptors: Homeschooling/Home school/Home education/Special needs/Special education
# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ....................................................................................................................... iii

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................ iv

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES .................................................................................................... vii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ................................................................................................................. ix

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................... 1
  Problem Statement ......................................................................................................................... 3
  Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 4
  Focus and Intent ........................................................................................................................... 5
  Guiding Questions ....................................................................................................................... 6
  Key Terms ...................................................................................................................................... 7

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ......................................................................................... 11
  Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 11
  Methodology ............................................................................................................................... 12
  Educational Theory ..................................................................................................................... 14
  Social Capital ............................................................................................................................. 14
  Teaching and Learning ............................................................................................................... 16
  Reasons for Homeschooling ........................................................................................................ 34
  Reasons for Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs ....................................... 35
  Reasons for Not Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs ............................... 39
  Legal Considerations .................................................................................................................. 42
  Sources for Support Services ...................................................................................................... 46
  The Dilemma .............................................................................................................................. 47
  Importance and Significance ........................................................................................................ 49

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ....................................................................................................... 52
  Overview of the Study .................................................................................................................. 52
  Design of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 53
  Selection of Participants .............................................................................................................. 54
  Selection of Site .......................................................................................................................... 56
  Researcher’s Role ......................................................................................................................... 57
  Data Gathering Methods ............................................................................................................. 59
  Instrumentation .......................................................................................................................... 63
  Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................. 66
  Ethical Issues ............................................................................................................................. 73

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .................................................................................................................. 75
  Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 75
Guiding Question 1 ................................................................................................. 75
Guiding Question 2 ................................................................................................. 91
Guiding Question 3 ................................................................................................. 92
Guiding Question 4 ................................................................................................. 97
Guiding Question 5 ................................................................................................. 100

Chapter 5: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION .......................................................... 109
Statement of the Problem ....................................................................................... 109
Review of the Methodology .................................................................................... 109
Summary of the Results .......................................................................................... 110
Discussion of the Results ....................................................................................... 115
Potential Threats and Limitations of the Study ..................................................... 129
Ethical Issues ......................................................................................................... 132
Summary .................................................................................................................. 134
Recommendations for Research ......................................................................... 137
Implications for Practical Application ................................................................... 138

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................... 141

APPENDICES
A: HOMESCHOOL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ....................................................... 151
B: PERMISSION TO USE DUFFEY’S INSTRUMENT ........................................... 153
C: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL .............................................. 155
D: EMAIL/PHONE SCRIPT OF INVITATION FOR PARTICIPATION ............. 165
E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM ......................................................................... 167
F: EMAIL TO PARENTS TO PREVIEW INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ............... 170
G: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT ............................................................... 172
H: TRANSCRIPT REVIEW FORMS .................................................................... 197
I: VALIDATION PROCESS ..................................................................................... 201
J: INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE ....................................................................... 209
K: RESOURCES SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS .......................................... 212
# LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: School Status of Siblings with No Special Education Needs (SEN) .................. 76

Table 2: Overall Curriculum Selection Preferences ......................................................... 82

Table 3: Curricular Preferences for Math ......................................................................... 82

Table 4: Curricular Preferences for Social Studies ............................................................. 83

Table 5: Curricular Preferences for Science ..................................................................... 84

Table 6: Curricular Preferences for Language Arts ............................................................ 85

Table 7: Interaction with Other Homeschoolers .................................................................. 86

Table 8: Level of Support for Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs Found in Homeschool Co-ops ................................................................. 88

Table 9: Greatest Satisfactions in Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs ......................................................... 88

Table 10: Greatest Frustrations in Homeschooling a Child with Special Education Needs ................................................................................................................................. 90

Table 11: Services Utilized from the School District of Residence ..................................... 92

Table 12: Services Received from Independent Resources ................................................. 93

Table 13: What Services Would You Like to Receive That You Are Not Receiving Now? ................................................................................................................................. 96

Table 14: Determining the Diagnosing Entity for Those Children Formally Diagnosed as Having Special Education Needs (SEN) ...................................................................... 102

Table 15: Four Categories of Advice for Future Homeschooling Families .......................... 104

Table 16: Resources or Suggestions for Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs ................................................................................................................................. 105

Table 17: Coping with Special Education Needs (SEN) ....................................................... 106

Table 18: Appreciating the Support Available Through Some Homeschool Evaluators/Consultants ................................................................................................................................. 107
Figure 1. Example of heterogeneity among homeschooling families based on participant families’ number of years of homeschooling. ........................................................................... 54

Figure 2. A map of Pennsylvania showing the distribution of where this study’s participant families live. ............................................................................................................. 57

Figure 3. Categories of families' reasons for homeschooling: negative exit – removing the child from negative situations in traditional school or positive entry – embracing homeschooling for its perceived advantages. .......................................................... 77

Figure 4. Reasons for beginning to homeschool. ................................................................................. 78

Figure 5. Reasons for continuing to homeschool. .................................................................................. 79

Figure 6. Comparing reasons for beginning and continuing. The number of families in this comparison is not equal to the total number of families in the study, because one family was just beginning to homeschool the week of the interview, and had no reasons to give for continuing. ............................................................................. 80

Figure 7. Diversity of special education needs (SEN) in participating families. The total is greater than 100% because some students have multiple diagnoses................. 81

Figure 8. Level of interaction with other families homeschooling special education needs (SEN). ......................................................................................................................... 87

Figure 9. Funding sources for independent resources. ......................................................................... 94

Figure 10. Differentiation of which families identify in documentation to their school district that their child has special education needs (SEN) and which families do not identify this in their documentation to the district. .............................................................. 98

Figure 11. Levels of understanding of the PA law as it pertains to homeschooling children with special education needs (SEN). ................................................................. 99

Figure 12. Comparing the levels of understanding of the law among the families who identify their children as having special education needs (SEN) with those who do not identify their children as having SEN in their documentation to their school district. ........................................................................................................... 99

Figure 13. Comparison of participating families with at least 1 child with a formal diagnosis to families with no children with a formal diagnosis......................... 101

Figure 14. Reasons given for not identifying special education needs (SEN) in documentation to the school district. ................................................................. 102
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Academic Engaged Time (AET)
Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
Individualized Home Education Plan (IHEP)
Learning Disability (LD)
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
Response to Intervention (RTI)
Special Education Needs (SEN)
Student Education Plan (SEP)
Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR)
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Homeschooling is a long-standing practice that diminished in the early twentieth century with the development of compulsory attendance laws (Gaither, 2008). The modern homeschool movement emerged in the late 1970s and has since flourished (Ray, B. D., 2000). Homeschooling is legal in all fifty states; yet, each state is governed by very different laws regarding homeschool regulations (Duvall, Delquardi, & Ward, 2004; Gaither, 2008). As the homeschooling movement has grown, the number of children with special education needs (SEN) being homeschooled has also increased. Some local school districts are recognizing this fact and are offering additional support services (Dahm, 1996; Lines, 2004). Because homeschooling families have traditionally sought autonomy (Lerner, 1995; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1999), families face a dilemma as they must consider the benefits of accessing those services as well as the possible drawbacks of increased involvement with their school districts.

As stated above, laws regarding homeschooling vary from state to state (Duvall et al., 2004; Gaither, 2008). The Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) allows for homeschooling families to receive, under certain conditions, special education services from their school district of residence. For the family to be able to access services from the district, both district officials and homeschooling parents must be in agreement.

According to Richman (1989), prior to the establishment of the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law, families desiring to homeschool within that state were subjected to the current sentiments of the administration in their local school district. While some administrators were supportive of homeschooling, others were adversarial, with threats of
truancy or even criminal charges. Richman reported that the homeschooling community began seeking legislation to standardize requirements for accountability and to establish boundaries to ensure their freedom to homeschool is protected. Since the development of the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988), parents have been required to file a notarized affidavit at the beginning of each school year, indicating their plans to homeschool. The law also required parents to provide educational objectives for the year as well as evidence of immunizations.

In addition to the required affidavit, the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) mandates each family to maintain a log and a portfolio in the style of their choice. The log and portfolio must demonstrate that the student has completed the state’s time requirement, has received instruction in the required subjects, and has made sustained progress in the overall program (The Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law). The law requires these three criteria so the program can meet the state’s definition of an *appropriate education*. The law also requires students in grades three, five, and eight to submit results from a nationally-normed standardized achievement test.

The Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) also stipulates that at the end of the school year, the families are required to see an evaluator of their choice. This person must meet the qualifications specified in the law. The evaluator is required to review the portfolio and log, interview the student, and certify that an appropriate education is taking place, as defined by the law. The families then submit the portfolio, log, and the evaluator’s letter to the school district superintendent. The school district maintains a file for each student, returning all original materials to the families. If necessary, the law defines a due process procedure when the district superintendent has a reasonable doubt
that an appropriate education is taking place.

In regard to homeschooling children who have been identified as having SEN, the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) requires parents to take an extra step. They must have a special education teacher or psychologist pre-approve their educational objectives and certify that these objectives address the child’s special needs. Some families consider this extra step to be an undue burden, especially if they reside in a school district which has been adversarial towards homeschooling. Extra requirements for homeschooling children with SEN have been described as infringing on parents’ rights and as being restrictive (Duffey, 1999).

Children who have attended district programs and have had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are already identified as having SEN. These children, therefore, qualify under the additional documentation category. However, if a student has not attended school district programs, parents have the option to forego this extra step. These parents may seek support services from private resources rather than request support from their school districts. On the other hand, some parents wish to seek support services from their school districts, and are willing to provide the extra documentation.

**Problem Statement**

The problem is parents homeschooling children with SEN are faced with the dilemma of engaging with their school district for support services. The Pennsylvania law (1988) states that, “any student who has been identified pursuant to the provisions of the Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 91-230, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.) as needing special education services” may be homeschooled as long as a certified special education teacher or licensed school psychologist approves the program. The
Pennsylvania law does not require any other homeschooling student to have his program pre-approved. Therefore, some families prefer to have their struggling learners remain unidentified in their documentation to the school district. These parents may seek support services for their children through private resources, rather than requesting help from the school district. However, the utilization of private resources presents the issue of how these resources will be funded.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine how homeschooling parents in Pennsylvania make the determination to engage with public school districts to accommodate the SEN of their children. Some school districts are willing to work amicably with homeschoolers, while others appear to be more adversarial. For example, one homeschooling mother with multiple students with SEN shared,

> What I want is the absolute best for my boys. The man that HSLDA put me in touch with through their special needs coordinator has tried to convince me to alert the public school that I have struggling learners. In our district, this is one of the worst things a home school family can do. I spoke with [an attorney from] HSLDA while at [a] convention and he said to not take that advice (Mrs. A, personal communication, May 14, 2010).

Homeschool Legal Defense Association (2008) usually cautions parents to find resources other than through their school district, which suggests there is a greater risk in interacting with government agencies rather than private resources. Duffey (2000) stated that descriptive data from research among homeschoolers dealing with SEN can “contribute to the knowledge base needed by state and district policymakers and program
developers either to adjust their own programs or to accommodate home schooling families that desire public school services and resources” (p. 7).

**Focus and Intent**

The focus of this research study was to determine why some families, who are homeschooling children with SEN, choose to work with their school district resources, while others choose to work with independent resources. The Pennsylvania law (1988) states that, “any student who has been identified pursuant to the provisions of the Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 91-230, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.) as needing special education services” may be homeschooled as long as a certified special education teacher or licensed school psychologist approves the program. Therefore, families who desire to seek support services from their school district must have their children formally identified as having SEN. Families who choose to seek support services from other resources may decide not to identify their child’s SEN in documentation submitted to their district.

This research examined reasons why homeschooling families choose either to formally identify their children as needing special education services or to have their children remain unidentified in documentation to the school district. By comparing the experiences and perceptions of these two groups of homeschooling families, I sought to identify patterns emerging from the data, which provided information that will be helpful both to new homeschooling families and to school districts.

This study’s intent was to investigate the reasons homeschooling families choose a particular accommodation and the subsequent advantages and disadvantages of their choices. The goal was to provide information and assist homeschooling families as they
make future decisions regarding special education accommodations.

**Guiding Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

**Guiding Question 1**

*What are the most common reasons for homeschooling a child with SEN?*

Through interviews I sought to identify key reasons for homeschooling children with SEN. I also hoped to discover answers to these related underlying questions. Are the parents homeschooling their other children, or only those with SEN? Have the children always been homeschooled? Were they previously enrolled in school? What were the reasons for changing? Similar questions were included in Homeschool Interview Questions located in Appendix A, and were adapted with permission from Duffey’s (2000) study (see Appendix B). Duffey’s study included families from several states, whereas, this study focused on participants from one state.

**Guiding Question 2**

*What are the most common support services received from school districts?*

Through interviews using Home School Interview Questions located in Appendix A, it was my intent to identify services received and key reasons for either accepting or refusing support services available through the family’s school district. Some districts refuse to provide services, while others are very accommodating. The Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) specifies that parents may seek support services from the school district, but both parents and district personnel must be in agreement in order for services to be provided. What reasons have led families to the choices they make regarding district services?
Guiding Question 3

What are the most common support services received from independent resources? Through interviews using Homeschool Interview Questions located in Appendix A, I sought to identify which independent services are received. I also hoped to discover answers to the following questions. What are some key reasons for seeking independent resources for special education support services? Which organizations are providing these services? How are these services funded?

Guiding Question 4

Why do some homeschooling families choose to have in documentation to the district their children formally identified as needing special education services? In light of Pennsylvania’s 1988 Homeschooling law and its documentation requirements, what are the advantages and disadvantages of identifying the child as having SEN? Through interviews, I explored the decision-making process that led parents to have their children formally identified in documentation to the school district as having SEN.

Guiding Question 5

Why do some homeschooling families prefer to have in documentation to the district their children remain unidentified as needing special education services? When considering Pennsylvania’s 1988 Homeschooling Law, what are the advantages and disadvantages of not identifying a child’s SEN in documentation to the school district? Through interviews, I explored the decision-making process that led parents to have their child’s SEN remain unidentified in documentation to the school district.

Key Terms

Homeschooling. Homeschooling is also known as home schooling, home
education, and home-based education. Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman (2001) stated, “Researchers, then, are faced with the difficult task of operationalizing a loosely-defined concept for a hard-to-reach homeschool population” (p. 18). The United States Department of Education charged them with the responsibility to collect nationwide data about homeschooling. They, therefore, had to operationalize a definition for this term and settled on the following. Homeschooling refers to situations in which the parents report their children being educated at home rather than at public or private schools. If the student is dually enrolled, to still be considered homeschooling, his time at a public or private school would not exceed twenty-five hours per week. Finally, the home education is not solely due to a temporary illness with intentions of returning to full-time attendance at a public or private school when possible (Bielick et al., 2001).

Basham, Merrifield, and Hepburn (2007) defined home schooling as occurring “when a child participates in his or her education at home rather than attending a public, private or other type of school” (p. 6). Arora (2006) defined elective home education as when the parents, as opposed to the state, assume responsibility for the children’s learning, and they do not receive money for their program. She further stated education does not necessarily take place in the home as this model’s flexibility allows families to participate in cooperative learning groups and to travel: furthermore, this flexibility allows families to adapt to different learning styles, which is ideal for children with SEN. The importance of Arora’s definition in this study is based on the fact that families in Pennsylvania receive no money for home education programs.

Cyberschool. While some definitions of homeschooling include cyberschools, cyberschools are not included in this study, because they are not addressed under the
Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988). Students enrolled in cyberschool are considered public school students in Pennsylvania. Although these students receive instruction in an alternate manner and alternate location, these programs are funded by the public schools.

**Special needs.** Regarding special education in homeschooling, frequently used terms include *special needs, special education needs (SEN), and struggling learner.* A child is considered as having *special needs* if he “is working two or more years behind grade level in school subjects, has been receiving special education services, or a child with any other disability that greatly impacts his/her ability to learn” (Homeschool Legal Defense Association [HSLDA], 2008, p. 3). Hensley (2009) included children with specific disabilities as well as children with more general learning disabilities, which are often hard to pinpoint. She found learning disabilities occur when a child has average or above average intelligence, yet he is below average in achievement and shows evidence of interference in receiving, processing or reproducing information.

**Special education needs (SEN).** Arora (2006) published a review of literature related to homeschooling children with special needs, using the term *special education needs (SEN).*

**Struggling learner.** If a child does not fit the definition of special needs, yet has to work extremely hard to learn, then he may be referred to as a *struggling learner* (HSLDA, 2008).

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP).** Children enrolled in formal special education services in the school system have an *Individualized Education Plan (IEP).* IEPs are legal documents with a due process procedure in place for circumstances in
which the plan is not followed. Hensley (2009) recommended that families homeschooling children with SEN develop an *Individualized Home Education Plan (IHEP)*. Kuhl (2009) differentiated between an IEP, a legal document, and a *Student Education Plan (SEP)*. In essence, the SEP helps families assess performance, set goals, and monitor progress, without the legal implications of an IEP.

**Identified.** The Pennsylvania law (1988) states that, “any student who has been identified pursuant to the provisions of the Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 91-230, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.) as needing special education services” may be homeschooled with certain provisions taken. For the purposes of this study, the term *identified* will refer to students whose SEN are documented with the local school district.

**Diagnosed.** For the purposes of this study, the term *diagnosed* will refer to when a professional has determined through the use of medical tests, psychological or other diagnostic tests, or standard checklists that a student has definite SEN, and may need an IEP if attending classes at the school district of residence. Diagnosing entities may be professionals within the school system or private practitioners.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Homeschooling is the practice of educating children mainly within the family setting at home, with the parent or guardian serving as the primary teacher (Reinhiller & Thomas, 1996). Although education in the home has a rich heritage, the modern homeschool movement did not emerge until in the 1970s. During this time, education in America was occurring in traditional classroom school settings (Gaither, 2008). Ray (B. D., 2000) found that since its emergence, the modern homeschool movement has continued to grow and diversify, which its critics did not expect. The current homeschool movement includes increasing numbers of minority families as well as families homeschooling children with special education needs (SEN) (Ray, B. D., 2000).

Although homeschooling is increasing, even among minority families and families who have children with SEN, conducting research among homeschooling families presents certain difficulties. The homeschooling population is geographically diverse, and researchers found there is a lack of adequate sampling frames (Collom, 2005; Lines, 2000; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1999; Ray, B., 2000; Stevens, 2003). Collom (2005) reported that homeschoolers are hesitant to participate in studies by unknown researchers.

Even with the limitations listed above, when examining prior studies, researchers have observed certain patterns. Ray (B. D, 2000) found there is little correlation between homeschoolers’ achievement and variables such as family income, amount of money spent on homeschooling, parents’ teacher certification status, or level of state regulation.
On the other hand, Ray reported statistical significance has been found between homeschool achievement and the following variables: father’s education level, mother’s education level, length of time taught in the home, frequency of visits to the public library, and the gender of the student.

In regard to homeschooling children with SEN, there is a scarcity of empirical research investigating this segment of the homeschooling population (Duffey, 2000). In 2004, Hartnett expressed an interest in the services homeschooled children with SEN received. She was also interested in how their portfolios and year-end evaluations were handled. The scarcity in data has impeded clear understanding of fundamental issues regarding homeschooling children with SEN (Collom, 2005; Lines, 2000; Mayberry et al., 1999; Ray, B., 2000; Stevens, 2003). Due to concerns in regard to inadequate sampling frames, a comprehensive examination of research methods can provide insight into homeschooling children with SEN.

**Methodology**

The term *methods* means *ways*, and it is based on its original Greek meaning (Van Manen, 1990). *Methodology*, with the suffix –*ology* indicating a study of something, is a study of these ways. There are two distinct research methods: (a) quantitative - based on statistics and (b) qualitative - based on description and narration. In 2006, Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen noted that quantitative research usually involves large sample populations, with a goal of providing statistical significance to support a hypothesis about a particular research focus. When designing a quantitative research study, researchers must consider effect size, as well as statistical significance (Ary et al., 2006). In order to achieve a smaller effect size, the researcher must utilize a larger sample size in the study.
Conversely, Ary et al. (2006) described qualitative research as more analytical in nature and utilizing smaller sample size. For example, they recommended using a sample size of 10 to 25 individual cases for qualitative research using a phenomenological approach. They explained phenomenology attempts to explore the essence of an experience as perceived by the participants. It provides pure descriptions of lived, everyday experiences, with the hope of gaining deeper understanding of these experiences (Van Manen, 1990).

Yet, phenomenology can be separated into two categories: hermeneutic and transcendental. According to Van Manen (1990), Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, also referred to as descriptive phenomenology, stresses that phenomenology is purely descriptive and interpretation is outside its realm. Hermeneutic phenomenology, or interpretive phenomenology, uses written language as a tool for interpreting living experiences. Van Manen described hermeneutic phenomenology as fundamentally a writing activity, which employs reflection of these experiences, because “a person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience” (p. 10).

Research discussing homeschooling children with SEN, although still limited, is a blend of quantitative (Duvall, Delquardi, & Ward, 2004) and mixed-methodology, which uses quantitative and qualitative components (Duffey, 2000). These studies indicate that children with SEN have been homeschooled successfully (Ray, 2000). This success may be better understood with an investigation into educational theory as well as teaching and learning practices being integrated into homeschooling.
Educational Theory

Social Capital

Homeschooling inherently reduces the student-to-teacher ratio and blends a tutoring approach with family life, which creates a unique and lasting experience (Ray, B. D., 2000). This type of experience is a form of social capital (Ray, 1997). Tierney (2006) stated, “Social capital is a framework that enables individuals and groups to accomplish particular goals” (p. 22). Tierney explained further that resources are developed within the network of relationships, with families being the primary example. Social capital’s function is to increase opportunities to accomplish feats that might not happen otherwise (Tierney, 2006). Laser and Leibowitz (2009) reported that social capital links social connections with positive outcomes and includes categories such as trust, obligation, bonding, bridging, marginalization issues, and values consistency. They noted youths with an increasing level of social capital show improved academic competencies.

Trust is one aspect of social capital, and groups that have trust and trustworthiness contribute to accomplishing more than groups without. An individual trusts that his support system will continue to exist and that his needs will be met (Laser & Leibowitz, 2009). Trust creates conditions for risk-taking. Trust involves two parties, most clearly exemplified in the infant-parent connection (Tierney, 2006). Trust is built through repeated interactions, which then generates confidence and creates bonds within a person’s closest circle of contacts. As the child grows, he has more contact with people outside his close circle. He develops a less intense bond with those people, which Laser and Leibowitz referred to as bridges. Conversely, disabilities or racial issues can create
exclusion or marginalization, which is the negative aspect of social capital (Laser & Leibowitz, 2009).

Students enrolled in traditional schools exhibit varying levels of trust. John (2005) and Laser and Leibowitz (2009) found that those students with higher levels of trust are more willing to accept information from teachers, which contributes to positive academic outcomes. When compared with public schools, John found the close networks and shared values of Catholic schools contribute to greater trust and social capital, which is particularly helpful for minorities. Overall, private schools engender more trust in their classrooms than do public schools, and homeschooleds engender even more; therefore, homeschooleds have higher levels of trust than both private and public schools (Ray, 1997).

Based on these higher levels of trust, some families, whose children have experienced marginalization, turn to homeschooling and begin to rebuild trust (Armstrong, 2004; Arora, 2006; Duffey, 2002; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Harrison, 1996). Laser and Leibowitz (2009) asserted that a parent’s emotional investment is important as it produces a strong attachment, strong interactions and support, and feelings of competency and self-efficacy. The authors found this strengthens future relationships and contributes towards self-esteem, independence, emotional responsiveness, empathy, and reduction in impulsivity.

In addition to trust, social capital builds important values, which may vary among cultural contexts, but include honesty, consistency, and fairness (Boslego, 2005). In 2005, John stated that education is not limited to information and skill development, but includes the transmission of values and norms. He noted that values transcend actions and situations, guide behavior, and relate to all aspects of life. Fries, Schmid, Dietz, and
Hofer (2005) found that most people prefer to interact with others who hold similar values. Unfortunately, values are not always compatible, which can result in conflict. Fries et al. stated this conflict can affect students’ performance, processing, focus, persistence, and mood. Ray (1997) discussed the development of trust within homogeneous homeschool groups and their unique ability to provide values consistency between home and group. When compared with public school students, Ray found homeschooled students do not experience values competition; therefore, homeschool families have a large amount of social capital.

**Teaching and Learning**

In addition to formal educational theory, an examination of good practices related to teaching and learning provides insight into how children with SEN can be successful in the homeschooling environment. This examination includes a tutoring approach, student-to-teacher ratio, mastery learning, and academic engaged time (AET). Further insight is derived from comparing Maslow’s hierarchy of needs with Bloom’s taxonomy. Still more insight comes from examining how private speech and movement can affect learning. Educator Charlotte Mason’s perspectives contributed to and encouraged good teaching and learning practices.

**Tutoring Approach**

Homeschooling models a tutoring approach, providing either one-on-one or small group instruction (Hensley, 2009; Ray, 1997). It is an individualized educational approach, both in curriculum - what is taught, and in instruction - how it is taught (Hensley, 2009; Ray, 1997). “Accounts from Plato and Socrates to Bruno and Vygotsky have garnered ample evidence that any content, no matter how complex, can be taught to
a child, provided that a skilled adult extract, simplify, and organize the learning materials appropriately” (Schacter, 2000, p. 802). When comparing America’s educational system with other countries, Bloom (1984) found America is primarily focused on teaching on a basic informational level. In contrast, other countries focus on higher mental processes in applying that information to real circumstances. Bloom’s two-sigma study found that tutored students’ mental processes were 98% higher than those of traditionally-taught students.

Bloom (1984) also observed that teachers unintentionally teach to the top 1/3 of the class. During this process, the teachers believe equality is occurring when giving encouragement and reinforcement to students who respond. Yet, in a one-on-one situation, Bloom found a teacher is able to provide constant feedback and correction. If the student does not understand the concept, then the teacher can adapt, which requires the student to be an active participant. Adjustments can be made for ineffective materials or for better aligning teaching with a student’s learning style. Making these adjustments is also referred to as sustained personalized alteration (Ray, 1997).

Although one-on-one instruction can help students with SEN, it does not erase the student’s deficits (Berens & Statnick, 2009). As stated above, sustained personalized alteration may mean adjusting curriculum selection or implementation. Use of a packaged curriculum may require adjustments in pace, and may turn out to be overwhelming, suggesting that perhaps parents consider using a blend of materials from various publishers (Berens & Statnick, 2009; Meighan, 1995). With this in mind, approximately 70% of homeschooling parents reported designing their curriculum to fit their students’ individual learning needs (Ray, B. D., 2000). Block (1980) investigated
homeschooling parents’ responsibilities. He found parents have the following responsibilities: specifying what is to be learned; motivating students to learn; providing instructional materials at a pace appropriate for the student; monitoring progress; diagnosing difficulties; providing remediation; encouraging the student; and reviewing and practicing for longer retention. In essence, homeschooling parents serve as teachers, who bridge what is to be taught with whom is to be taught (Block, 1980).

Bloom (1984) recognized the value of a tutoring approach in education, calling it the “best learning conditions we can devise” (p. 4). Conversely, he found society cannot handle the cost of large-scale one-on-one tutoring. Therefore, he sought a comparable educational approach. Collaborative online learning, especially with writing assignments, is one comparable strategy (Schacter, 2000). Interestingly, this strategy is effective with students either in traditional classes or in homeschools.

Schacter (2000) cautioned that one potential drawback of a tutorial approach, which maximizes student-teacher contact, is that it minimizes student-student contact. Children learn from each other by discussing ideas, opinions, and beliefs, and by learning to resolve conflicts. Vygotsky advocated students learning from more advanced peers (Schacter, 2000). Recognizing this potential drawback, homeschoolers are encouraged to participate in cooperative groups and to interact with students on multiple learning levels, strategies which are included in specially designed homeschool curriculum as well (Thaxton & Hulcy, 1989). By blending supplementary cooperative groups with the one-on-one or small group instruction in the home, homeschooling capitalizes on the benefits of the tutoring approach to teaching (Ray, B. D., 2000).
Student-to-Teacher Ratio

Student-to-teacher ratio, and its effect on student learning, is closely related to the tutoring approach (Finn, Gerber, Achilles, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2001). Tobin and Sprague (2000) found reduced class size is a research-based alternative educational strategy with convincing evidence of positive outcomes. They also found a lower student-to-teacher ratio provided students with more personal teaching time, which resulted in behavioral gains and higher instructional quality.

Smaller classes reduced distractions and provided teachers with more time to devote to students. When analyzing the results of Tennessee’s Project STAR, Mosteller (1995) reported, “It was clear that smaller classes did produce substantial improvement in early learning and cognitive studies” (p. 113). The long-term outcomes of Project STAR, which stands for Student Teacher Achievement Ratio, were found to be positive. Students who were in smaller classes during their early years were more apt to take college entrance exams (Kreuger & Whitmore, 2001).

In contrast, Arum and LaFree (2008) found that students educated in classrooms with higher student-to-teacher ratios faced greater risks of incarceration as adults. They also found that smaller classes increased student performance on standardized tests. Arum and LaFree found that smaller classes from Kindergarten to third grade contributed to early learning and cognitive development. This reinforced the importance of the timing for introducing and continuing lower student-to-teacher ratios.

There are two key principles related to the timing of introducing and continuing smaller classes. One principle is that the positive effects of smaller class size increase with each year of continued placement in a small class. In 2001, Finn, Gerber, Achilles,
and Boyd-Zaharias reaffirmed the importance of continuing in smaller classes. The second principle is that starting smaller classes in the early grades is important. Finn et al. found both the year of entering smaller classes and the number of years continuing in smaller classes affects this educational variable’s impact. The positive long-term outcomes of early small class size declined by over 50% for those students who were later placed in regular size classrooms (Kreger & Whitmore, 2001).

In addition to its impact on regular education students, student-to-teacher ratio is an important variable for special education students. Some students with SEN, who have not been optimally served in traditional programs, have experienced better outcomes in alternative schools designed to lower student-to-teacher ratio (Bowman-Perrot, Greenwood, & Tapia, 2007). In 2006, approximately 6,000,000 students in the United States were being served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), with 54% being served in general education classrooms (Giangreco, Hurley, & Suter, 2009).

While in some situations the ratio of full-time special education teachers to students with disabilities was 1:15, this ratio varied widely among states. With the practice of inclusion increasing, most special education teachers have additional duties. Giangreco, Hurley and Suter (2009) stated, “Nationally, in the 2006–2007 school year, there was one special educator FTE for every 121 students of total enrollment” (p. 53). In order to lower this ratio, schools have employed almost one paraprofessional to each professional in special education. Giangreco, Hurley and Suter questioned whether this was the best practice to lower student-to-teacher ratio in special education.
Mastery Learning

Mastery learning is another good practice related to teaching and learning. Mastery learning refers to the idea of wanting students to be competent by making sure they have mastered the concepts studied, ensuring they have a strong foundation before they advance to new material. Rosenshine (1978) commented, “As obvious as it seems, we’re not doing this for all children” (p. 41). In 1980, Block asserted that when pursuing mastery learning, any teacher can help all students learn. Mastery learning involves a set of practices, including individualized instruction, that help most students learn well. Block noted that helping students acquire basic intellectual, manual and emotional skills contributes to life-long learning. He further explained that when mastery learning is approached systematically, students are helped when and where they encounter difficulty, and are given sufficient time and clear criteria for mastery.

Block (1980) found that student learning problems are frequently tied to unresolved difficulties, precluding mastery of foundational skills or concepts. He added that mastery learning involves identifying these difficulties, providing corrective intervention, and allowing the student to move on to the next skill level. Corrective intervention strategies should not be re-teaching. Block asserted that these strategies must be different from the initial teaching methods. These corrective strategies include allowing additional time for the student to learn the new concepts. These strategies, which are in essence differentiated instruction, incorporate various approaches to accommodate differences in learning styles, learning modalities and types of intelligence (Guskey, 2007 & 2010).

Guskey (2010) identified one of the researched-based strategies for differentiated
instruction as Response to Intervention (RTI), which seeks to identify those students who need additional support in the regular classroom and those who need special education. He noted the principles of RTI correspond to principles previously discussed with both the tutoring approach and lower student-to-teacher ratios. Guskey reported RTI stresses engaging students in high quality, research-based instruction that is developmentally appropriate for each student. He emphasized this instruction should be multi-faceted, adapted to the context, tied to the student’s interests and expectations, and differentiated based on each student’s knowledge, disposition and background.

Teachers often teach in routine formats with routine timelines for progressing through their lessons. Guskey (2007) found that although this approach is effective for some students whose learning styles match the teaching style, other students learn very little and lag behind. A lack of variation among teaching styles creates large discrepancies among students’ learning. Guskey encouraged teachers to heed Bloom’s suggestions for employing differentiated mastery learning by varying instructional approaches as well as time allowed for learning. Bloom’s 1984 study compared three scenarios: a traditional classroom using periodic tests for marking student learning; a traditional classroom using periodic tests for feedback, corrective procedures, and follow-up parallel tests to measure mastery; and a program using one-on-one tutoring with periodic tests, corrective teaching and parallel follow-up tests. He noted the latter scenario required less corrective work.

To determine the results of each of these scenarios, Bloom (1984) conducted a final standardized test with a sample randomly selected from among the three groups. He found that students from the traditional classroom, which used a mastery learning
approach, scored one standard deviation point above the students from the traditional
classroom not using a mastery learning approach. He also found that the students in the
tutoring scenario scored two standard deviation points above the first group, showing that
mastery learning and a tutorial approach were both more effective for student learning
than the traditional classroom. The practice of striving for mastery learning is effective
for all students, including those with SEN in the homeschool situation.

**Academic Engaged Time**

In addition to the tutoring approach, student-to-teacher ratios, and mastery
learning, the concept of Academic Engaged Time (AET) is useful in developing good
teaching and learning practices. Rosenshine (1978) described AET as the time a student
spends engaged in academically relevant, moderately difficult material. He noted that
teachers do not need to strive for 100% AET. Rosenshine reported that the focus of AET
is developing awareness of the total minutes per day in which the students are focused on
their work. Greater AET usually leads to greater academic achievement (Duvall et al.,
2004). Rosenshine listed the following important instructional variables regarding AET:
(a) maintaining a strong academic focus, and (b) showing encouragement and concern for
the progress of each individual student.

Reflecting back to his 1984 study, Bloom compared time on task among the three
aforementioned educational groups: students in a traditional class; students in a
traditional class focusing on mastery learning; and students being taught using the
tutoring approach. He used random placement among several grade levels for his
sampling. He found the students in the traditional class were on task 65% of the time.
Students in the traditional class focusing on mastery learning were on task 75% of the
time. Students in the tutoring group were on task more than 90% of the time. Bloom also noted that students in the third group showed the greatest interest and motivation/attitude, whereas, the students in the first group showed the lowest interest and motivation/attitude.

Another study compared students in a traditional classroom environment with students in a homeschool environment. “The results indicated that homeschool students were academically engaged about two times as often as public school students” (Duvall et al., 2004, p.140). The key variable seemed to be the student-to-teacher ratios in the homeschooling environment. Even if homeschoolers have shorter school days, their days are often more intense than their traditional counterparts (Duvall et al.; Ray, 1997). While AET is higher among homeschooled students, AET among homeschooled students with SEN was more than double that of traditionally-schooled students with SEN (Ray, B. D., 2000). Homeschooling can provide the flexibility for short bursts of AET throughout the day, without being limited by traditional school hours (Ray, 2002).

**Bloom’s Taxonomy and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning can be applied to the educational theory and good teaching and learning practices previously discussed (Pyles, 2004; Terry & Leppa, 2009). Terry and Leppa (2009) proposed an alignment of Maslow’s and Bloom’s levels. Maslow’s first level of Basic Life Needs aligns with Bloom’s Collecting Materials, with students needing to feel secure and having the sense of being able to achieve or succeed. Terry and Leppa compared the second level in both models, Maslow’s Safety Needs with Bloom’s Basic Knowledge. In both models, students need to feel safe in the learning environment before real learning can take place.
Maslow’s third level of Social Needs aligns with Bloom’s Comprehension and Application as students need sense of belonging and safety with people in their learning environment (Terry & Leppa, 2009). On the fourth level, Terry and Leppa (2009) compared Maslow’s Esteem Needs with Bloom’s Application and Analysis, noting students’ need for affirmation and validation. On the fifth and final level, Terry and Leppa aligned Maslow’s Self-actualization with Bloom’s Creating when students are able to reflect on their learning and apply the knowledge they have acquired.

Terry and Leppa (2009) stated that in both Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning, students must have their needs met at each level before they can move to the next level. Students must work through the first three levels prior to addressing the fourth level, where true learning occurs and students experience competence and adequacy (Cohen & Dennick, 2009; Pyles, 2004; Terry & Leppa, 2009). Learning is better achieved when external threats are reduced and there is an increased sense of safety (Terry & Leppa, 2009).

Hannaford (2005) found this sense of reduced threat and increased safety is achieved when the student progresses through the first three levels of both models. She noted the sense of safety frees the student to engage in learning. According to Hannaford, a person actively engaged in the learning process naturally produces internal chemicals, alternating between increased dopamine, decreased adrenaline, and decreased cortisol. However, when confronted with a perceived threat, dopamine levels decrease and adrenaline and cortisol levels increase, which can lead to depression if it becomes chronic. The educators’ challenge, therefore, is to minimize barriers to learning and maximize individuals’ potential for achievement (Terry & Leppa, 2009). For example,
children need to know that making mistakes in a supportive environment is important to learning.

Unfortunately, students with SEN who attend traditional schools often do not have the necessary AET or trust levels, which could hinder them from progressing up Maslow’s Hierarchy. For example, most students with Asperger’s Syndrome struggle to move past Maslow’s second level of Safety (Pyles, 2004). They spend so much of their time in the traditional school setting dealing with security, stability and fear that real learning is often impeded. Due to the security and stability of the home environment, children with Asperger’s Syndrome can move quickly to the fourth level of the hierarchy and begin true learning (Pyles, 2004). In 2004 Hartnett reported one student with Asperger’s Syndrome, who had experienced being tripped and hit with stones, was constantly anxious about the next possible act of cruelty. Harnett explained this constant state of anxiety kept the student in the lower three levels of Maslow’s hierarchy, seeking safety, and thus unable to implement learning strategies. Hartnett cited another situation involving a student with Asperger’s Syndrome, who was moved from a traditional classroom to homeschooling. This student reported being able to process information and remember more than when he was trying to deal with the stressful social dynamics he faced in school. The familiarity of the home environment contributed to positive feelings, which helped these students move on towards self-actualization (O’Connor, 2008).

Private Speech

Pyles (2004) stated one unique feature of the homeschool environment is that students can talk out loud to help themselves process and learn without distracting others
in a classroom. According to Slavin (2006), Vygotsky’s theory about private speech asserts that talking aloud assists learning. Vygotsky believed learning occurs when a child’s mind embraces new concepts, using either silent or audible private speech to process the new information. Slavin explained the child uses musings to figure out how to resolve the tension between his established schemata and the newly introduced concepts.

**Movement**

The homeschool environment is conducive to allowing more movement as well as talking aloud (Ray, 2002). For example, adolescents with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have right frontal brain lobe deficits, which contribute to their hyperactivity (Panksepp, Burgdorf, Turner, & Gordon, 2003). Play therapy was found to reduce hyperactivity. Panksepp et al. (2003) proposed that providing opportunities for rough and tumble play may benefit children of all ages with ADHD. Hannaford (2005) agreed, adding that rough and tumble play also gives opportunities for healthy touch. She explained healthy touch is important during adolescence as it can reduce hyperactivity and symptoms of ADHD. Hannaford described Denmark’s educational practices in Forest Kindergarten. Students between ages 2.5 and 6 engage in climbing rocks, hills, and trees, as well as rolling, jumping and balancing activities. These outdoor activities take place for a minimum of four hours per day in all weather conditions. She pointed out Denmark’s low incidence of children with learning disabilities and dyslexia.

Considering the positive effects of movement on student learning, Hannaford (2005) conducted a study involving 19 students with SEN. She administered the Brigance Inventory of Basic Skills as a pre- and post-test. Her treatment was five to ten
minutes daily of Brain Gym® activities for one school year. She found an average gain of one to two years for all students in reading and reading comprehension. She also noted a gain of one or more years for 50% of the students in math. With simple, drug-free movements, Brain Gym® produced significant academic improvement in students with the following labels: LD, ADHD, Emotional Disabilities, Autism, Dyslexia and Down’s Syndrome. Hannaford noted some schools have incorporated the Brain Gym program. Ray (2002) recognized the important influence of movement on learning as well, noting the flexibility of the homeschool environment allows students to stand up or pace during academic activities if needed.

**Charlotte Mason**

Charlotte Mason, a 19th century British educator, also believed in the importance of movement and the necessity of allowing children to move about (Martinez, 2009). She believed play was just as important as lessons, especially in the early years. Martinez (2009) found Mason stressed the importance of allowing children time to explore outdoors. With this in mind, Mason believed that children’s natural curiosity is the impetus for their education. Mason believed a child’s home environment is superior to a school’s artificial environment, particularly for younger children. She operated cottage schools and advocated home education when possible. Her program included nature study, math with manipulatives, foreign language, poetry, literature, and narration. Mason described narration as having children retell an event or story in their own words.

Macauley (1984) reported that although society at the time believed children should be seen and not heard, Mason believed children are real people and individuals in their own right. Macauley discussed the key points of Mason’s philosophy. Mason
asserted that children should be introduced to the richness of their world through authentic experiences. Mason believed in giving children time to process new things and in allowing their natural curiosity to bring forth questions. Mason rejected a utilitarianism approach to education, asserting that children’s minds should be respected and not filled with twaddle, her term for superfluous information. She wondered why schools utilized workbooks when the children could be doing hands-on activities. She also wondered why basal readers used skill testing and fragments of stories rather than literary classics in their entirety.

Macauley (1984) further reported that Mason believed the child’s mind is the instrument of his education rather than a product of it. Mason viewed education as a personal ladder with each child, even those with SEN, moving up when ready, as opposed to using a pass or fail measurement criteria. She valued the importance of adults reading good literature to children, and then allowing them to go play and either act out the story or invent their own episodes and adventures, without adults meddling (Macauley, 1984).

**Learning Styles**

Mason’s theory of living, multi-sensory education allows children to learn and develop, regardless of their learning modality preferences or learning styles. According to Maher (2008), *learning styles* refers to how students receive and perceive new information. Maher distinguished learning styles from *learning preference*, which refers to those conditions under which students prefer to work. These conditions could include preferences for working in noisy versus quiet environments and working alone or with other students. The term *learning style* is used interchangeably throughout the literature
with cognitive style, learning strategy, and learner aptitude. Maher stated, “In considering learning and how to improve student learning, one needs to understand how students learn” (p. 54). She wondered how teachers can improve students’ learning experiences when they do not know the students’ individual learning styles. Yet, the literature also questions whether differences in learning styles even exist. In fact, some researchers question the credibility of the whole concept, suggesting the need to explore even the basis of these theories (Diaz & Carnal, 1999).

Franklin (2006) not only opposed how learning styles have been incorporated in classrooms, but also challenged their foundation. Franklin stressed that learners are not of one ilk. He asserted individuals are a blend of learning styles with certain learning styles being more dominant than others. Franklin stressed the importance of diversifying instructional activities so all learners benefit. Maher (2008) cautioned that honing in on one style per student is counter-productive. She also questioned the validity and reliability of learning styles assessment instruments. Dembo and Howard (2007) questioned the pedagogical value of focusing on learning styles. They pondered whether it is better to match instruction with students’ learning styles or to help students become more rounded. Therefore, while literature questions learning style theory, it does not deny the existence of learning styles. Dembo and Howard suggested that instructors teach students about learning styles, design instruction with scaffolding, and adapt instruction based on students’ levels of prior knowledge.

According to Diaz and Cartnal (1999), teachers have observed that students respond to different instructional methods. They asserted that people view the world in different ways. Diaz and Cartnal delineated the following differences which affect
learning: (a) how students process new information, (b) when they best process that information, (c) where they are most productive, and (d) how often they need to review the information to attain mastery. Franklin (2006) cautioned teachers to remember that all students do not learn the same way; in addition, not all students match the instructor’s personal teaching style. Hawk and Shah (2007) analyzed the various theories of learning styles. While some of these theories claim a student has a fixed disposition, others assert that student dispositions are malleable, and can be adapted to assist in learning and studying. Jones, Reichard and Mokhtari (2003) found significant differences in students’ learning styles across disciplines, and they concluded that learning styles are subject-area sensitive.

Several authors have developed a variety of learning styles models. Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences is one model. God created each child with various types of intelligence (Martinez, 2009). Gardner’s types of intelligence are as follows: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, body-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist (Martinez).

In contrast, Nilson (1998) described Kolb’s model, which is arranged in a circular continuum and highlights four basic preferences for learning. First, the Concrete Experience learning preference group includes students who prefer hands-on activities, relying on feelings as opposed to thinking. Second, the Reflective Observation group refers to students who tend to be objective and try to see situations from various perspectives. Third, the Abstract Conceptualization group includes students who prefer logical thinking, precision, and systematic planning. Finally, Active Experimentation includes students who are organized, goal-directed, and have a tolerance for taking risks.
Generally, students have a strong preference, beginning in one of these four groups, but eventually they join in or work through all four modes of learning at various levels (Hawk & Shah, 2007).

Hannaford (2005) compared brain dominance profiles, which is another way of analyzing students’ learning styles. She was particularly interested in seeing how schools used this information in assigning labels to students with SEN. Hannaford adapted a more traditional theory of right brain versus left brain dominance, preferring to use the terms logic for left hemisphere dominance and gestalt for right hemisphere dominance. She explained that sometimes people’s brain functions are transposed, doing left brain functions from the right brain and vice versa, hence her preference for her modified terminology. Hannaford found that 78% of logic students were in general education classrooms, whereas just over 20% of logic students were in special education placements.

Conversely, Hannaford (2005) found just over 20% of gestalt students in general education placements, but almost 78% of gestalt students were in special education placements. She defined gestalt students as those who approach thinking from a holistic, intuitive and image-based perspective as opposed to a verbal-based perspective. She expressed concern that the current educational system focuses on verbal-based thinking and neglects gestalt-style thinking. Her concern was that some students may be erroneously labeled as having SEN when perhaps they were gestalt thinkers. Hannaford stressed that educators “must strive to understand and facilitate the learning process of the gestalt learner so we do not lose this valuable resource” (p. 206).

Whether students are learning in traditional classroom environments or in
homeschool environments, teachers must learn to adjust their pedagogical strategies. Teachers should not focus only on how they personally learned, but should determine how their students learn. If students are struggling with learning, then a conflict between teaching style and learning style may emerge, which can lead to stress (Berens & Statnick, 2009; Field, 2005).

Considering the vast information about different learning styles, Meighan (1995) specifically encouraged homeschooling parents to be flexible and address their children’s individual needs. According to Meighan, homeschool parents’ roles include those of instructor, facilitator, co-learner and encourager, requiring variety in strategies, curriculum and discipline. Martinez (2009) stressed that one advantage of homeschooling is that parents who have awareness about learning styles can truly customize their children’s education. This awareness allows parents to nurture the children’s strengths and strengthen their weaknesses.

Customizing children’s education according to their strengths and weaknesses is true individualization. Stevens (2003) described homeschooling as highly individualized, resource-intensive of parenting. This individualization provides a perfect backdrop for homeschooling children with SEN. Stevens suggested that if the general homeschool movement has transitioned from being counter-culture to a generally accepted educational choice, then perhaps special needs homeschooling will follow the same trajectory. He also suggested that what is taking place in the United States can provide helpful insights into the development of home education in other countries.


**Reasons for Homeschooling**

As the educational climate in America continues to change, each family faces decisions about their children’s schooling. Therefore, an examination of reasons for choosing homeschooling is warranted. Ray (2000) cited the following reasons given for families choosing home education: (a) to strive for academic success, (b) to individualize teaching and learning, (c) to enhance family relationships, (d) to provide guided social interaction with people of all ages, (e) to transmit values and worldviews, and (f) to provide safety for their children.

Gray (1993) found additional reasons for homeschooling including the physiological and neurological maturity of the child, moral or philosophical conflicts, curriculum and instruction concerns, financial constraints, and governance issues. He also noted psychological damage and peer dependence from previous traditional school experiences. Gray noted special needs of either the parents or children as another reason for homeschooling.

While commonalities may be found in reasons for homeschooling, homeschoolers are certainly not a homogeneous group, sharing little other than their choices to home educate (Rothermel, 2003). In an attempt to analyze the homeschool community, several researchers have developed taxonomies. Arora (2006) divided homeschoolers into two groups: children who had never gone to traditional school and those who had attended traditional school. Some families are mixed with certain children going to school while other siblings remain home for homeschooling.

Rothermel (2003) noted that families sometimes seek homeschooling as a temporary way to deal with problems that arise in a traditional school setting. They often
hope to re-enroll their child in traditional school at a later date. Ray (1997) classified this as *negative exit* from either public school or private school with parents choosing homeschooling to avoid certain disadvantages of institutionalized schools. In contrast, *positive entry* into homeschooling means parents were choosing homeschooling primarily for what they saw as its advantages. Rothermel added that parents generally have one set of reasons for beginning to homeschool, yet another set of reasons evolves for continuing to homeschool.

**Reasons for Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs**

Moving from general reasons for homeschooling, reasons for specifically homeschooling children with SEN need further examination. Ten percent of school-aged children have some kind of special education need (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006). Assuming that the homeschooling population reflects the school-aged population at large, with the estimate of 1.1 million homeschoolers Princiotta and Bielick (2006) predicted there could be 100,000 homeschooled students with SEN. However, in a nation-wide phone survey, Princiotta & Bielick found 28.9% (316,000) of the respondents cited their child’s SEN as one of the reasons for homeschooling. Of that 316,000, 79,000 (7.2%) reported that SEN was their primary reason for homeschooling. Children above age 13 have been homeschooled for reasons related to SEN more than twice as frequently as the number of children under age 14 (Isenberg, 2007).

In addition to statistical studies, other research has yielded descriptive information, with parents sharing their reasons for choosing to homeschool their children with SEN. For example, Armstrong (2004) found most parents had a similar story: the children were doing poorly in traditional special education programs, they were frustrated
and either hostile or apathetic, but they exhibited positive changes after homeschooling for a time. Schetter and Lighthall (2009) noted that children identified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder often face danger in the school setting because their lack of social understanding puts them at risk to accept dares and unacceptable challenges. This lack of appropriate boundaries could lead to trouble with the school administration or even with the law.

According to Hannaford (2005) and Hartnett (2004), some parents stated that as the stress level in school increased so did their child’s negative behaviors. As a result, the school added more interventions and therapies, but the process continued to spiral downward. However, when they removed their child from the traditional special education program, both the environmental stress and the child’s negative behaviors decreased.

In addition to their safety concerns, parents want to teach at their child’s level and in shorter segments, especially for children with attention problems (Dahm, 1996). Homeschooling closely models a tutoring approach to teaching, providing either one-on-one or small group instruction (Hensley, 2009; Ray, 1997). Furthermore, it allows for a truly individualized approach to education, both in curriculum and in instruction (Hensley, 2009; Ray, 1997). Adjustments, also known as sustained personalized alteration, can be made regularly for ineffective materials or for better aligning with a student’s learning style (Ray, 1997).

Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) examined parents’ beliefs about traditional special education programs. They used a four-item scale to assess parents’ beliefs in the following areas: values, special needs, and pedagogy. They found that meeting
individual special needs was more important to parents than opinions about special education curriculum. Green and Hoover-Dempsey also found that parents disliked the following practices in traditional schools: tracking, labeling, and focusing on extrinsic motivation for learning. In fact, parents stated that they want their children to be able to live without the embarrassment of being labeled (Dahm, 1996). In the United States, Hannaford (2005) reported between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 children, mostly boys, have been labeled with specific LDs. Unfortunately, labeling protocol focuses on behavior rather than on identifying pathologies. According to Hannaford, the labeling process is over simplified as it does not focus on the inner person, which can lead to lower self-esteem and lower potential for learning.

Although some parents avoid having their children labeled, Hensley (2009) found labels serve two purposes. First, labels help parents of children with SEN avoid denial and labels assist them in moving through the natural stages of grief in a healthy manner. Second, labels also help parents locate information on how to address the child’s special needs and plan an appropriate program. This increased awareness helps parents focus on both strengths and weaknesses, not just weaknesses. Field (2005) reported one parent stating, “I don’t like labels, but I’ve learned not to fear them” (p. 3). Field also noted professional diagnoses, and their corresponding labels, can give parents an explanation of years of struggles and doubts about their parenting.

Hensley (2009) further stated that parents need to sort through and identify their expectations and emotions, and acknowledge that homeschooling cannot cure a child of his disability. When parents move past labels and acknowledge their child’s learning disability, they are able to view their child as a whole person and not a learning disabled
To illustrate the difference between seeing someone as a whole person rather than as a disabled person, Robert Russell (1962) discussed his encounter with a store clerk. He recounted how the clerk treated him as a person who could not see as opposed to a blind person. With the focus being on him as a person rather than on his blindness, Russell felt freed. By focusing on the person instead of the label, parents can address both academics and behaviors. Hensley (2009) found that all children, even those with severe disabilities, need to learn obedience, self-control, and respect for authority. If parents cannot deal with their child’s behavior, then perhaps they will not be able to teach their child academics. Hensley concluded that even if a child never learns to read or write, it is an accomplishment if he or she is well-behaved and is able to go out among people.

Bannier (2007) also conducted a study examining parents’ reasons for choosing to homeschool their children with special needs as opposed to sending them to a more traditional school. His study focused on public schools and private schools, especially Christian schools. Bannier observed that children with SEN were unable to enroll in Christian schools. This observation warranted a closer examination.

In his book, Sutton (1993) cited John Vaughn, founder of a Christian school specifically designed for children with SEN. Vaughn pointed out that other than Christ, no teacher or school administrator knows and cares about a child, or has as much responsibility for that child as do the child’s parents. The book’s editor, a special education professor and a consultant for homeschoolers, Sutton stated that Christian education has done little in meeting the needs of children with SEN. He noted that
special education is simply individualized education, and Christian schools’ budget limitations prevent them from providing that individualization.

Conversely, homeschooling allows for one-on-one instruction. Yet, finances are a critical component in any educational decision, even more so with special education. Both traditional schools and homeschooling families must consider the costs and funding. When a family is deciding whether or not to homeschool their child with SEN, finances can impact their decision.

**Reasons for Not Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs**

Interestingly, Hensley (2009) is one of the few authors who both endorsed homeschooling children with SEN and cautioned against it. One reason a family might decide against homeschooling would be if the mother is not able to overcome the feelings of inadequacy that besiege all homeschooling parents, especially those with children with SEN. In addition, if parents are not willing to discipline their children, and if they blame everything on the child’s disability, then they should avoid homeschooling.

Lebeda (2007) found the lack of opportunities for socialization is the main reason people present for dissuading a family considering homeschooling. Socialization is described as interactions that help develop relationships with others as well as teach self-regulation. Hartnett (2004) asserted that families should examine both the purpose for seeking social interaction and the type of people appropriate to meet that purpose.

For the general student population, socialization has both positive and negative outcomes. Yet, for students whose SEN affects their ability to relate to others, socialization outcomes are often negative. Unfortunately, these students do not learn in school how to get along with others. In fact, Hartnett (2004) asserted that their tolerance
of negativity is tested daily. With the ability to monitor and select social situations, homeschooling parents can help their children process their social interactions and turn them into learning experiences. In the non-school world, few people spend six hours each day only with peers who are similar in age. Parents who heed the warnings about socialization concerns can minimize negative interactions and maximize positive contact with people of various ages (Lebeda, 2007).

Schetter and Lighthall (2009) listed nine drawbacks parents need to consider before taking on the task of homeschooling a child with SEN. These include the following possible drawbacks: (a) the time commitment required, (b) the change in the dynamics of the relationships, (c) the challenges among friends and family, (d) the child resisting the decision, (e) the parents’ self-doubt, (f) the knowledge of how to access therapies, (g) the cost of homeschooling, (h) the potential for burnout, and (i) the knowledge of laws. Each of these drawbacks were discussed in further detail.

The first of Schetter and Lighthall’s (2009) drawbacks is the time commitment required. For some families this involves the loss of a second income. It certainly involves a reduction in time to spend on personal pursuits. Homeschooling requires time for planning, organizing, documenting and teaching. Closely related to the time commitment is the change in the dynamics of the relationships within the home. The main teaching parent and the student are basically together 24 hours, seven days each week. This change can be particularly difficult for children on the Autism Spectrum, who find any change difficult, especially one in which there is a major role change within the home. Schetter and Lighthall cautioned parents not to let the intensity of the changed relationship inadvertently foster dependency.
Not only do homeschooling families face challenges within their homes, but they also face challenges among friends and family. According to Schetter and Lighthall (2009), professionals sometimes question or even discourage parents’ decisions to homeschool their children with SEN. This lack of support often stems from fear of the unknown, and may be based on genuine concern for the parents or the child. The parents may also get resistance from the child himself if he is not supportive of the decision to homeschool. Most parents never anticipated homeschooling, and made the decision only contemplating what would be best for their child. “There are times as parents that a decision must be made and carried out regardless of the wishes of the child” (Schetter & Lighthall, 2009, p. 56).

Despite their belief that homeschooling is the appropriate decision, parents still experience self-doubt (Hensley, 2009). Examining that self-doubt, Schetter and Lighthall (2009) reported parents typically doubt their ability to select curriculum and to employ effective teaching strategies, and to have enough patience to keep their child motivated to learn. They may be concerned with keeping a balance at home, both in their household routines and in their relationships with their other children. Moreover, Moores (2001) asserted they may still be working through the natural grieving process associated with having their child identified with some type of disability. These parents may wonder whose fault it is or even if they are being punished for past sins.

Schetter and Lighthall (2009) reported another major consideration in weighing a decision to homeschool a child with SEN is how to access therapies and services. Some schools allow homeschooling families to still utilize services at the schools. When this is either not allowed or not desired, the parents must locate other resources. Schetter and
Lighthall warned that along with completing the requisite insurance claims, parents need to be persistent.

When insurance will not cover services for the child, the family incurs the cost of homeschooling a child with SEN, which is another drawback reported by Schetter and Lighthall (2009). This includes the cost of services and curricular materials, and a potential loss of income. Needless to say, the aforementioned drawbacks can result in burnout. Schetter and Lighthall cautioned parents to care for themselves and to seek support from other homeschooling families, especially those who are also homeschooling children with SEN. Without these support sources, stress may build within the home. This stress within the home can be disruptive, and it can result in negative stress patterns for children. The family is important for modeling behavior and they must strive to maintain a coherent, peaceful, and safe home (Hannaford, 2005).

Finally, Schetter and Lighthall (2009) stated the responsibility of knowing and understanding the laws about both homeschooling and disabilities is daunting. A closer examination of these laws is warranted.

**Legal Considerations**

In America, the right to homeschool is central to personal autonomy and is protected by the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution (Lerner, 1995). In 2001, Congress banned any provision of the No Child Left Behind act being applied to homeschoolers, thus homeschoolers are free from undue burden (Isenberg, 2007). From a historical perspective, between 1930 and 1970, “few changes were made in the laws governing the relationship between the rights of parents and the rights of states relative to children’s education” (Mayberry et al., 1999, p. 13). After 1970, there was an increase in
court cases debating parents’ rights versus states’ rights in educational choice (Mayberry et al., 1999). Since the 1970s, each state has developed its own law or policy regarding homeschooling (Gaither, 2008).

For the purposes of this study, an examination of both the federal special education law and the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) is appropriate. In 1975, the federal government enacted a law, P.L. 94-142, that provides free and appropriate education for all children with disabilities (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006). This law has been amended several times, with its most recent amendment in 2004, and it is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006). To establish criteria for qualifying for special education, the IDEA identifies 13 categories of disabilities. In areas such as vision or hearing impairment, the categories are clear. Yet, learning disabilities are harder to delineate and have resulted in considerable debate.

In regard to categorizing and diagnosing students, the IDEA states that educators should not use the traditional formula of significant discrepancy between achievement test scores and intelligence measures (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2006). Instead, IDEA explains that children qualify for services under the category of learning disabilities when they do not achieve adequately for their age when provided with age/grade appropriate instruction and learning experiences. IDEA also specifies that children can qualify in one or more of the following categories: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, math calculation, and math problem solving. To qualify under the category of learning disabilities, the child’s struggle should not be related to
vision, hearing, or motor disabilities, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, cultural factors, environmental or economic disadvantage, or issues related to being an English language learner (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2006).

Duvall et al. (2004) found local agencies often oppose homeschooling for children who qualify for special education under the IDEA. The Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) asserts that under the first and fourteenth amendments of the Constitution of the United States, homeschoolers have the right to educate their children with special needs (Duffey, 1999). While homeschooling is legal in all 50 states, each state is governed by different laws regarding homeschool regulations. Therefore, Pennsylvania’s 1988 Homeschooling Law is pertinent to this study.

Pennsylvania’s 1988 Homeschooling Law specifies that each family, prior to beginning a homeschool program with children of compulsory attendance age, must submit a notarized affidavit attesting to several provisions. The parents attest the following: instruction will be provided for the required subjects and for the required time; at least one parent has a high school diploma; and no one in the home has been convicted of certain crimes. The child’s immunization records and a list of educational objectives for each child must accompany the affidavit. For a child previously identified as needing special education services, these objectives must address the child’s special needs.

Families with children who have been formally identified with SEN must also provide a letter from a certified special education teacher or a psychologist stating that the objectives do indeed address the child’s special needs. Regarding identification of
SEN, the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) states, “…any student who has been identified pursuant to the provisions of the Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 91-239, U.S.C. 1401 et seq.) as needing special education services…” Families may request special education services from the district, but both district officials and homeschooling parents must be in agreement for the family to be able to access services.

In addition to the affidavit at the beginning of the year, the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) requires that at the end of the year, each homeschooled child of compulsory school age must be evaluated by a certified teacher of the family’s choice. During this process, the evaluator interviews the child and reviews a portfolio the family has prepared. The evaluator is required to certify that an appropriate education is taking place. The evaluator must adhere to the state’s definition of appropriate, which means the required subjects were included in the instruction, the required time was completed, and evidence of sustained progress in the overall program was provided. For children in grades 3, 5, and 8, the portfolio must also include results from a standardized test.

In order to allow flexibility in each child’s program, there are no specific requirements for how much instruction time per subject or how much content of a subject should be taught. The Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) permits the families to choose their own curriculum. They also can request course plans, textbooks and other materials from the school district, which the district must provide. The law also specifies that if the family and the district are both in agreement, then the school district may provide special education services to the child at one of the district’s facilities. In 2006, the law was amended and all homeschooled students residing within a school district are allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities (Richman, 2005-2006).
Sources for Support Services

Before a family can request the district to provide special education support services, the parents must examine their options and make crucial decisions including whether they want to have their child identified as needing special education services. Children who have been enrolled in traditional school in special education already have been identified as having SEN and usually have an IEP. But for children who have never attended traditional school, their parents must consider the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing identification.

With this in mind, parents need to know their rights, learn the laws that pertain to homeschool, as well as learn how to work in partnership with their local education agency (Arora, 2006). The Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) cautioned that in some situations, school districts actually require more from families who have children with special needs (Duffey, 1999). One example of this is Pennsylvania’s extra requirement of a letter from a certified special education teacher.

The HSLDA’s website provides further recommendations for families with struggling learners (Homeschooling a struggling learner, 2008). HSLDA also retains Special Needs Coordinators on their staff. HSLDA cautions that if families are receiving services from their school district as opposed to independent sources, then their child’s academic progress could be more rigidly scrutinized and questioned. As a result of this potential scrutiny, HSLDA acknowledges that some families limit their interactions with government agencies. They recommend that families find resources through private providers. In fact, their web site lists numerous resources. Interestingly, some families use psychologists, who have no school district affiliation, to assess and possibly identify
their children as having SEN (Duffey, 2002).

Unfortunately, private programs are often not covered by insurance; therefore, the family is financially responsible. Sutton (1993) found special education’s cost can double that of regular education. Some families struggle with the financial burden of providing extra resources for their child with SEN (Arora, 2006). Sutton suggested that if the special needs were diagnosed and services were prescribed by a medical doctor or a clinical psychologist, then perhaps an insurance company would pay for the child’s services.

Conversely, if the family lives in a school district friendly to homeschoolers, then they may be able to receive services at no cost (Lambert, 2001). Also if a child is diagnosed as having a learning disability, then he may be eligible to receive, at no cost, books on tape through the Library of Congress (Ensign, 2000). In regard to older students who are formally identified, they may receive testing accommodations for the SAT. In addition, when these students are preparing to take college classes, they may be eligible for support through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR).

**The Dilemma**

After reviewing their rights and options, and weighing the advantages and disadvantages, each family must decide how involved they will be with their local school district. Next, families must decide how they will access the support services needed to provide an effective program for their children with SEN.

The term *homeschooling* arouses strong feelings in people, both for and against. In their 1999 research, Mayberry et al. found that parents and professionals often disagree on how and where children learn best. Therefore, tensions and misunderstandings
frequently occur between homeschooling families and their local school districts. Mayberry et al. reported that the professional community may misread homeschooling parents’ goals, intentions and abilities, whereas those parents often misread and feel threatened by the districts’ concerns. Mayberry et al. stated, “A core group of parent educators clearly reject any services or assistance that conventional schools might offer to some home-educating families. Their explicit intention is to operate a fully autonomous and independent home school” (p. 79). Yet, other families wish they received support from traditional schools, saying they are unaware of what services are available to them from their district.

When examining other state’s practices, Lines (2004) noted Alaska offers the oldest public school-sponsored homeschool program, which offers curriculum and educational events. Dahm (1996) and Lines found some school districts in Iowa offer instruction, guidance, and extracurricular services to homeschoolers. Furthermore, in Washington state’s coastal area, all districts welcome homeschool participation in district programs. However, to help with funding issues, they invited homeschoolers to enroll as part-time students in the Homeschool Plus program, requiring five hours weekly attendance at the district’s schools.

Barrett (2003), a school administrator, explained how he encouraged Arizona’s school districts, along with other states to embrace homeschoolers. Lines (2004) identified two categories of homeschooling: the independent homeschool students and the enrolled home study students, with the latter being based in the home but using public school curriculum and receiving support. This latter group also included cyber-schools. According to Mayberry et al. (1999), homeschooling activist John Holt suggested that
homeschooling students could bring energy, enthusiasm, intelligence and motivation to those schools who open their doors to homeschoolers. Despite the controversy that surrounds the question of whether school districts and homeschoolers should work together, Mayberry et al. noted there is “the often-overlooked fact that parent educators and educational professionals do successfully cooperate” (p. 83).

**Importance and Significance**

Homeschooling is an ever growing presence in the discussion of school choice. This study has focused on the growing number of families who are homeschooling children with SEN. As additional research is conducted with this population, homeschooling families will be equipped to make more informed choices. These choices range from curriculum to documentation according to each state’s particular law. The results of this study may help dispel some of the myths about interaction between these families and their school districts of residence. Some families may discover a non-threatening resource for services that do not require out-of-pocket expenses. Other families may learn of different sources of support services.

The information can also help school districts develop amiable, professional relationships with families who are homeschooling within their jurisdiction. If districts can identify the types of services needed or currently being utilized, even if private practitioners provide them, then they may be able to implement strategies to help these families. An increase in the number of children with special needs being served can benefit the school districts with an associated increase in government funding. There is a need for further study about blending special education and homeschooling, particularly about accessing support services either from private sources or from school districts.
“Cooperation is unquestionably a subject needing further inquiry” (Mayberry et al., 1999, p.83).

This study has implications for educators in traditional schools as well. According to Bannier (2007) within the unique conditions of the homeschooling environment, parents are able to hand-select curricular materials, hand-select assessment materials, and provide time one-on-one with each student. Bannier suggests that Developmental Education practitioners could learn much from homeschoolers in that the ideal flexibility and time constraints inherent in homeschooling would also be ideal in Developmental Education programs.

Furthermore, this study also has significance from a larger perspective. Christians believe that each human is created in the Image of God. Ephesians 2:10 expands this idea stating, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (New American Standard Bible, 1995). This concept also applies to children with SEN. Secular philosophy too often focuses on what these children cannot do, conveying that these children have something wrong or broken. Yet, as stated in Jeremiah 29:11, God has a plan for each one of these children.

For parents and other educators who refuse to accept the secular perspective, this study can shed light on how parents are fulfilling their responsibility, as exhorted in Ephesians 4:12, to equip these saints for those works of service referred to previously in Ephesians 2:10 (New American Standard Bible, 1995). These children may learn differently, but the reward comes when teachers find the approach and materials that “click” with that child’s learning style. Then he can achieve his potential for that which
God has created Him. This study encourages parents and other teachers to heed Galatians 6:9, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary” (New American Standard Bible, 1995).
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

This study followed good practices for qualitative research, using a phenomenological design. I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board of Liberty University to proceed with the study (Appendix C). I identified 30 families in Pennsylvania who are homeschooling or have homeschooled children with special education needs (SEN) and requested their permission to participate in this study. I then emailed a list of interview questions to the parents, which gave them the opportunity to think about their responses and to write notes prior to the interview. In order to help in the transcribing process and to provide methods triangulation to assure that the data truly does accurately portray the participants’ perspectives, I asked them to email those notes to me.

The interview questions were adapted from questions used in a previous study and were used with permission from the original researcher (Appendix B). The semi-structured interviews were conducted either in the participants’ homes, in my home, which is a familiar, non-threatening place to most participants, or at an alternate location of the participants’ choosing. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed from the recordings. Data were analyzed by using the constant comparative method, which involved collecting, transcribing and analyzing data in an ongoing cyclical manner, and watching for emerging patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This study examined reasons why homeschooling families arrived at their choices to either formally identify their children as needing special education services or have their children remain
unidentified in documentation to the district. By comparing the attitudes and perceptions of these two groups of homeschooling families, patterns emerged in the data that may be helpful both to new homeschooling families and to school districts.

**Design of the Study**

This study used a phenomenological design. It focused on the essence of the experience of homeschooling a child with SEN from the perspective of the participants (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described phenomenology as the study of individuals who share a particular trait but do not form groups. Rothermel (2003) stressed that homeschoolers are not a homogeneous group, as they have little in common other than their desire to home educate. Therefore, this study was indeed phenomenological, studying individuals who share the trait of homeschooling children with SEN, yet who do not form an identified or cohesive group.

Although the shared trait is that of homeschooling a child with SEN, the variety of those special needs prevented the categorization of participants into set groups. In addition to the various ages of the children with SEN who are homeschooled, the districts of residence, documentation practices, curricular choices, and the length of time each family has been homeschooling also varied (see Figure 1). The participants did share the trait of homeschooling in the state of Pennsylvania under the specifics of this state’s laws. Yet, there is enough flexibility within the law to allow for individual interpretation and application, which prevents dividing the population into specific identifiable groups.
Figure 1. Example of heterogeneity among homeschooling families based on participant families’ number of years of homeschooling.

Of the various phenomenological approaches in qualitative research, this study took a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Not only did this study describe the participants’ experiences, as would a transcendental phenomenological study according to Van Manen (1990), it also utilized verbatim interview transcripts, and analyzed them for patterns and themes, with the researcher writing and re-writing and seeking to interpret the participants’ texts of their life experiences.

Selection of Participants

For this study, I solicited potential subjects by contacting homeschooling families whom I know, and by contacting other professional evaluators who work with homeschooling families. Since 1997, I have served as a professional consultant and evaluator according to the 1988 Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law. My clientele consists of a growing number of families who have children with SEN.

I utilized maximum variation sampling, which seeks to identify central themes
that override pervasive variation among participants (Patton, 1990). Ary et al. (2006) recommended using a sample size of between 10 and 25 individual cases. To strengthen the study, I chose to use a sample size of 30. The heterogeneity of a small sample of homeschool families may be limiting because of the vast diversity among cases. Yet, Patton (1990) lauds maximum variation sampling logic in that, “Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program” (p. 172). By employing maximum variation sampling, this study revealed differences and identified commonalities among experiences of families homeschooling children with SEN (Ary et al., 2006).

Following the contact script in Appendix D, I made initial contact with homeschooling families whom I knew. This contact was made in person, by phone, or electronically. These families were a blend of people from my consultation clientele as well as other families whom I personally knew but who utilized the services of other evaluators. Three families declined to participate. One other family took the Informed Consent Form but did not return it. Three families agreed to participate in the study, signed the Informed Consent Form, and later withdrew from the study prior to being interviewed. All three said they were considering enrolling their children with SEN in a traditional school and were in turmoil over this decision; therefore, they were uncomfortable participating in this study. I also used the same information in the script to contact four other evaluators, asking them if they knew any families who would be interested in participating in the study. I gave permission to them to share my email address and phone number and ask those families to contact me. Two families contacted
me and expressed interest in participating. Twenty of the participant families have been
my clients for more than a year. Ten of the families were either other evaluators’ clients
or were new to my clientele for less than a year.

**Selection of Site**

This particular study was not site-specific, although it did focus on families
homeschooling in Pennsylvania. Since homeschooling takes place in families’ homes,
the participants’ homes were a natural location for interviews. However, some
participants declined having the interview in their homes. I then gave the participants the
option of meeting in my home; many participants visit my home yearly and generally
regard it as a familiar and comfortable location. For some participants, neither of these
options was acceptable, so I asked them to choose a neutral location in which they would
feel comfortable. Four families requested that I meet them in a restaurant of their
choosing. Seven requested to meet in my home. One asked me to meet her in a clinic
waiting room while she was waiting for her child to complete a therapy session. The
remaining 18 participants invited me to their homes.

The families represented a wide geographical range within the state of
Pennsylvania, representing 23 different school districts of residence, both rural and
suburban. Their homes were scattered throughout central and eastern Pennsylvania; one
family lived in northwestern Pennsylvania (see Figure 2). I traveled more than 1,600
miles for interviews, often conducting several interviews in one trip.
Figure 2. A map of Pennsylvania showing the distribution of where this study’s participant families live.

Researcher’s Role

Dr. Jane G. Duffey (2000) noted in her own doctoral dissertation that empirical studies about homeschooling children with SEN are lacking. While homeschooling is legal in all 50 states, the laws are state specific. Duffey’s study included participants from several states. This study focused on the specific nuances of the law in Pennsylvania and its implication for homeschooling and special education.
I have been homeschooling my own children for 19 years, remaining in compliance with the law in Pennsylvania. Two of my children had SEN. One was formally diagnosed and was identified in documentation to the school district and received services from the school district. The other was neither formally diagnosed nor identified in documentation to the school district and did not receive services from the school district. Furthermore, in addition to homeschooling my own children, I have served in the capacity of a homeschool evaluator for other homeschooling families. According to the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988), each family homeschooling children of compulsory attendance age must meet with a certified teacher for a year-end evaluation. I am a certified teacher and have evaluated at least 270 different homeschooling families since 1997. I have seen families provide accommodations in many different ways for children with SEN.

While my personal involvement could present bias, I have both experienced and observed the various sides of many of the issues inherent in this study, such as labeling, identifying SEN in documentation, and seeking support services. I am not a strong proponent of one approach over another, and I am interested in formally examining other families’ experiences.

Furthermore, I have established a position of personal and professional ethics, which allows me to present information to people, but has taught me to allow others to make their own choices. I have established my desire to model scriptural principles in all endeavors. Manipulating information to sway people and their decisions to follow my personal preferences would not be ethical. Scripture mandates that truth be communicated in love at all times (Ephesians 4:15). Another tenet in my ethical position
is my desire to work with excellence in all things, and to be pleasing to the Lord in all as well. Tampering with the families’ decisions, or even with the results, interpretations, or applications of this study would be neither a standard of excellence, nor would it be pleasing to the Lord.

**Data Gathering Methods**

This study used a hermeneutic phenomenological design. For phenomenological studies, Ary et al. (2006) recommended personal, unstructured interviews lasting between one and two hours, with the possibility of subsequent interviews with the same participants. Whyte (1979) preferred the term *flexibly structured* interviews, explaining that the researcher often has a structure in mind, but is flexible about the order of questions and remains alert for statements that lead to new lines of investigation. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described these in-depth interviews as focusing on “understanding, in considerable detail, how people such as teachers, principals, and students think and how they came to develop the perspectives they hold” (p.3).

I conducted flexibly structured interviews, following Duffey’s (2000) study as a model. Duffey described her interviews as using self-developed questions, with some at the beginning being demographic, but with the main focus being on 12 open-ended questions used to explore various aspects of homeschooling children with SEN. Regarding her interview questions, she stated, “there was opportunity to deviate from them during the interviews to pursue opportunities for more in-depth responses” (p. 77). For this study, the interviews, based on questions from Duffey’s study, varied in length. The shortest interview lasted 15 minutes and the longest interview lasted 90 minutes.

Following the script in Appendix D, I requested potential participants’ permission
either in person, by phone, or electronically to participate in this study. When in person, I asked the family to sign the Informed Consent Form (Appendix E). When initial interest in participating in the study was obtained either by phone or electronically, I mailed the Informed Consent Form to the family with a stamped, addressed return envelope. Upon receiving the signed Informed Consent Forms, I assigned each family a letter code for identification within the study from that point forward in order to ensure confidentiality. I also set interview appointments with each family.

I then emailed or mailed to the parents a list of interview questions, which gave them the opportunity to think about their responses and write notes prior to the interview (see Appendix F). I asked them to email those notes to me to help in the transcribing process and to provide methods triangulation to assure that the data accurately portray the participants’ perspectives. Some families complied with this request, while others brought a few jotted notes to the interview, and others did not refer to notes during their interview. During the interview, I provided the participant a copy of the contact information noted on the Informed Consent Form. Because the participants returned the forms to me, I made sure they had a copy of the contact information for their records. I tried to make note of doing this during each recorded interview, so a record of doing so appears in the transcripts of the interviews.

The questions used during the interviews were adapted from questions used in a previous study and were used with permission from the original researcher (Appendix B). I recorded the interviews using a Sony ICDPX312 digital voice recorder, which was specifically purchased for this study. I also made brief field notes describing the environment and other people present, or made notes to omit interactions unrelated to the
interview. For example, when we addressed a waiter in a restaurant, I did not include a verbatim account of that interaction in the interview transcript.

I transcribed each interview from the recordings using the identification codes assigned to each family prior to the interviews, and I deleted all references to names and identifying locations (Appendix G). I also added field notes at the beginning of some of the transcripts. I then uploaded the interview audio files and the transcripts to a password-protected internet account on SkyDrive.

I enlisted the help of three other individuals to serve as reviewers who would check for accuracy in the transcriptions by comparing them with the audio files from the interviews. One of these individuals has a business degree and has an analytical mind. The second has a master’s degree in education and is very attentive to detail. The third individual has an earned doctoral degree and has experience both in research and in analysis of qualitative data. I shared with the reviewers the password to access the SkyDrive account and set the account so only those individuals had access. The first two individuals reviewed each transcript in its entirety comparing it to the audio recording of the interview and checking in detail for accuracy. The third reviewer conducted spot checks of the edited and corrected transcripts to validate inter-rater accuracy and reliability. Each reviewer submitted notes to me of any inaccuracies, and I then corrected and reposted the transcripts so the other reviewers were checking the most up-to-date version. Each reviewer kept a record of which transcripts she had checked on a form that I developed and provided. She returned the form when all reviews were completed (Appendix H).

This process of checking for accuracy within the transcripts helped combat crisis
Denzin and Lincoln (2005) observed the blurred line between fieldwork and writing. They reported a problematic assumption questioning “traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research” (p. 19). They further explained that this crisis of representation specifically questioned validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. Therefore, having several individuals check the researcher’s transcription of the interview recordings helped strengthen the reliability and accuracy of the transcribing process and combat a legitimation crisis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Qualitative research practices encourage member checks as another way to combat crisis of representation, by having the researcher ask participants to review the interview transcripts and check if they feel the researcher accurately captured their input (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). Therefore, I sent to each participant a copy of the transcript from his or her interview. I asked the participants to contact me if they had any questions or comments about the transcripts. One family made one editorial suggestion for clarity, and nine families responded that all appeared to be in order. I received no questions or comments from the other 20 families.

With the transcription and review processes concluded, I erased the recordings on the Sony ICDPX312 digital voice recorder and removed the audio files and the transcripts from the SkyDrive account. I also deleted copies of these files from the hard drive of my personal computer. I saved the files to a flashdrive, which is being stored for a minimum of three years along with the Informed Consent Forms in a locked cabinet in my office at Bloomsburg University.
**Instrumentation**

Dr. Jane Duffey (2000) conducted research for her doctoral dissertation investigating homeschooling children with SEN. Her study included participants from several states. This study, however, focused on one state and the specifics of that state’s homeschooling law in regard to homeschooling children with SEN. I obtained permission from Duffey to utilize her questions and instrument (Appendix B). I adapted this instrument. To ensure validity, I contacted and asked six individuals, who were familiar with research protocol, to assess the adapted instrument looking for consistency between the original and the new questions, as well as potential bias in the questions.

In email correspondence (Appendix I), two individuals with earned doctoral degrees and two individuals who were writing their own doctoral dissertations reported they were unable to discern which interview questions were from the original instrument and which had been added. They also reported that all questions appeared to be free of bias. I met in person with two other individuals with earned doctoral degrees and who were familiar with research. They assessed the questions, and while they were unable to discern between the original and the added questions, they did suggest I shorten the list of questions, to make it less burdensome. They both reported that no question either seemed leading or would give respondents pressure to answer in a particular way. I did eliminate some of the questions, shortening the list from 18 to 14 questions, and added one open-ended question for the participants to share anything they wanted to add.

Each of the interview questions was anchored to the five guiding questions which were foundational to this study.

**Guiding question 1.** *What are the most common reasons for homeschooling a*
child with special education needs? To address this first guiding question, I interviewed parents in Pennsylvania who are homeschooling children with SEN. Although the interviews were relatively flexibly structured, I utilized Homeschool Interview Questions in Appendix A. The list was not necessarily followed in order and may have had questions added or deleted based on the results of each interview. Questions 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 from Appendix A specifically addressed this first guiding question.

Guiding question 2. What are the most common support services provided by the school district? Not only is it important to understand parents’ reasons for homeschooling their children with SEN, but it is also important to explore their reasons for utilizing or for refusing support services from their local school district. This second guiding question was addressed in questions 5, 6, 7, and 8 in Homeschool Interview Questions (Appendix A) in the flexibly-structured interviews with the parents. I re-affirmed the confidentiality of the participants’ information, so they did not feel threatened talking about their relationships with their school districts. I emphasized that no identifying information would be included in the final dissertation and that names would be changed.

Guiding question 3. What are the most common support services received from independent resources? Another important aspect to understand when exploring accommodations for homeschooling children with SEN is whether or not the families are utilizing resources outside the school district for support services. This guiding question was included in the recorded interviews as well, and it was specifically addressed in questions 5, 6, and 8 from Homeschool Interview Questions (Appendix A). The issue of funding for these services also was explored in this question. Some families pay out of
pocket, while some utilize insurance plans. Once again, it was crucial for me to emphasize the steps taken to ensure confidentiality.

**Guiding question 4.** *Why do some homeschooling families choose to have their children formally identified as needing special education services in documentation to the district?* One additional and important aspect to understand in exploring accommodations for homeschooling children with SEN is whether or not the families formally identified these children in the documentation to their school district of residence according to the provisions set forth in the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988). I sought to ascertain advantages and disadvantages of having these children identified, exploring this issue through interview questions, specifically question 4, worded carefully so it did not appear that I was leading the participant or showing bias about this issue (see Appendix A). Confidentiality again was important and was reaffirmed during this part of the interview.

**Guiding question 5.** *Why do some homeschooling families prefer to have their children remain unidentified as needing special education services in documentation to the district?* The fifth guiding question of this study is closely related to the fourth guiding question. I sought to ascertain advantages and disadvantages of having these children remain unidentified, exploring this issue through interview questions, specifically question 4, worded carefully so it did not appear that I was leading the participant or showing bias about this issue (see Appendix A). Confidentiality again was important and was reaffirmed during this part of the interview.
Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by using the constant comparative method, which involved collecting, transcribing and analyzing data in an ongoing cyclical manner, and also watching for emerging patterns, which were categorized and coded (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I collected the answers to each interview question from each transcript and compiled separate documents. I also created another document to collect any biographical information including the participating families’ size and number of years they had been homeschooling. I then reviewed the compiled documents from each interview question. Next, I looked for patterns, repeated words or phrases or even stark contrasts, and I created appropriate codes for each. I created an Excel spreadsheet to assist in sorting the data into categories and in creating tables and figures for displaying the results of the study in graphic form.

For interview question 1 regarding reasons for beginning homeschooling children with SEN, I used codes for positive entry or negative exit as presented in the literature (Ray, 1997). I also found that all 30 responses fit well into four main categories: (a) struggles with traditional school, (b) inner conviction, (c) limited options with Christian schools, and (d) flexibility. For interview question 2 regarding reasons for continuing to homeschool, I was able to group responses together into five categories: (a) inner conviction, (b) ability to individualize the education, (c) family bonds created, (d) concern that the child would struggle even more if enrolled in a traditional school, and (e) a sense of being pleased with the child’s progress in the homeschool program. I then compared the responses from each family for the first two interview questions, coding the comparison as *same* or *different* and also comparing between the two coded groups for
the first question, positive entry and negative exit.

For interview question 3, I coded the various types of special needs among the 46 students with SEN in this study’s focus. I found they could be separated into six categories: (a) ADD/ADHD, (b) learning disabilities, (c) deaf/hard-of-hearing, (d) Tourette’s, (e) physical issues, and (f) those on the autism spectrum. I also coded the diagnosing entity, all of which later formed three categories: professionals in private practice, professionals in a school, and no diagnosing entity.

For interview question 4, I coded parents’ responses according to the level of their understanding of the homeschool law’s requirements for students with SEN. By coding, I found they formed three categories: understanding the law with accuracy, semi-understanding the law with some inaccuracy, and being unsure of the law with little to no accuracy. Those families in the first category had a full grasp that the law requires when children are identified in documentation to the school district as having SEN, the parents must have their programs for these children pre-approved by a Pennsylvania-certified special education teacher or by a licensed clinical psychologist or certified school psychologist. They also understood the pre-approval included having the professional certify that the annual educational objectives address the child’s special needs. Those families in the second category understood some requirements of the law but did not fully comprehend all its specifics. Those families in the third category were unable to articulate the specifics of the law with accuracy, even if they had vague ideas that there were special requirements for homeschooling a child with SEN. Some parents willingly identified their children as having SEN and filed with the district a letter of approval of their educational objectives written by a certified special education teacher or a
psychologist. Other parents did not identify in their documentation to the district the children as having SEN.

For interview question 5, I coded any service the participants named. The focus of the question was on services currently being received; however, in the course of discussion, the families sometimes also named services received in the past. I saw value in hearing of these services as well, so I accepted all responses for this interview question. These responses were coded into 19 different categories. Families who reported utilizing no services at the moment were placed in a separate category.

For interview question 6, I coded resources for funding the services listed in the previous interview question. The responses were then separated into six categories: (a) private insurance, (b) the state’s medical access program, (c) tax-sheltered medical flex plans, (d) funding from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), (e) out of the families’ personal finances (out of pocket), and (f) those services provided at no cost to the family (gratis).

For interview question 7, the families described services they have received from their school district or intermediate unit. Some services listed, like participating in sports or utilizing the services of the school nurse, while helpful in balancing the child’s overall program, were not necessarily focused as a support service for SEN. Other services were noted to have been utilized in the past, but were not currently being delivered. Hearing therapy was the only current SEN services being utilized. For interview question 8, I coded a wide range of responses indicating services families wished they could receive. Thirteen small categories emerged, with the largest group stating that they did not currently wish for anything more.
For interview question 9, the families named a wide variety of curricular materials they have used. I coded them by subject area and was able to organize them into five categories: overall, math, science, social studies, and language arts. Data were presented separately for each of these categories.

For interview question 10, I had to look at broader phrases and sentences rather than just repeated words or brief phrases to assess statements about the children’s progress. I highlighted specific sections of the transcripts and copied and pasted these sections into lists of comments about positive progress and comments about concerns or worries. I then highlighted recurring themes in different colors to enhance analysis.

For interview question 11, I coded responses related to participant families’ interaction with other homeschoolers. I also looked for references to interaction with other families homeschooling children with SEN. I coded types of interactions, and eventually categorized the responses into types of homeschool cooperative groups, assessing families’ levels of involvement. Other themes that emerged related to the sense of the level of support derived from these interactions.

For interview question 12, I coded participants’ expressions of satisfaction. Some participants had multiple sources of satisfaction with homeschooling their children with SEN. However, after coding repeated words, phrases and ideas, patterns began to emerge which resulted in six categories: (a) achievement, which was often connected to specific accomplishments; (b) progress, which could have been more general than achievement or even measured in small steps; (c) differentiated instruction, related to individualization, which has become a recurring theme throughout this study; (d) protection, especially the families who began homeschooling to remove their children from negative social stress in
school; (e) time together as a family; and (f) character development.

Conversely, for interview question 13, I coded participants’ expressions of frustration. Again, some participants had multiple sources of frustration, but soon patterns began to emerge and seven categories developed. Two of these categories were internally focused for the parent: a sense of overwhelming responsibility and self-doubt. Two categories were focused on the teaching process: engaging, motivating the child, dealing with attitude; dealing with the stress of navigating the SEN. Three smaller categories were focused on outside influences: contractors missing deadlines delaying school; negativity from other people; the challenge of understanding the homeschool law.

For interview question 14, I coded participant responses for offering advice to future homeschooling families. Looking for nuggets of advice, I highlighted phrases in different colors, and noticed four categories emerging. Some parents offered advice on how to get started with homeschooling. Others gave advice on developing a philosophy and approach to homeschooling. Still others focused their advice on developing an action plan. The final group advised new homeschoolers to seek out sources of support.

Finally, I coded interview question 15, seeking repeated words and phrases among responses to an open-ended question asking parents to add anything else they would like.

Trustworthiness

Ary et al. (2006) encouraged researchers to strive for trustworthiness in the validity or reliability of a study. One method of data collection may be limited in its ability to assure truthfulness of the data. They suggested blending several methods, such as interviews utilizing both verbal and written responses, to provide methods
triangulation to assure that the data truly does accurately portray the participants’ perspectives. For example, during the interview part of this study, participants may have felt threatened or uncomfortable sharing particular information with the researcher. As a result, they may have withheld information or perhaps even offered false information. However, participants were given the opportunity to contemplate the interview questions in advance by email and may have felt freer to share information on paper rather than to a researcher.

I encouraged participants to bring their written responses to the verbal interviews. Some participants brought detailed notes and others referred to brief notes. I also encouraged participants to email their written notes to me to assist me in the transcription process, assuring that I was accurately conveying their thoughts. Only one participant chose to email her notes to me.

Accurately portraying the meaning of the participants is another way to increase the trustworthiness and the internal validity of this study. Asking some of the participants to conduct member checks by reviewing the field notes, interview transcripts, and data results as they emerge can help increase trustworthiness (Ary et al., 2006). Qualitative research practices encourage these member checks, by having the researcher present the interview transcripts to participants and ask if they feel the researcher accurately captured their input (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). Therefore, I sent emails to all participants with their transcripts as a file attachment, so they could check for accuracy and be assured of the confidentiality by seeing how identifying information was removed. I asked the participants to contact me if they had any questions or comments about the transcripts. One participant did not have
email. I called him to ask if he would like to review the transcript, and at his request mailed the transcript to him. One family made one editorial suggestion for clarity, and nine families responded that all appeared to be in order. I received no questions or comments from the other 20 families.

Another potential threat to the internal validity of this study relates to the degree to which the results align with established theory. The researcher needs to be careful to tie in theory from other academic disciplines. I included in the review of literature sections on educational theory and teaching and learning. As I conducted the interviews and began the data analysis, I frequently reflected on the theory presented in the literature review and drew from that to develop my categories and codes for the data analysis and interpretation steps of this study.

A final potential threat to this study’s internal validity was that of possible bias. This study has negative case sampling built into it. It involved both families that chose to identify their children as having SEN to the local school district and families who chose to have their children remain unidentified as needing special education services in their district documentation.

**Limitations**

The results of this study may not be widely generalizable due to its specific focus on homeschooling in Pennsylvania. The study was also specific to homeschooling children with SEN, but not to all homeschoolers in general. However, the principles and resources that have emerged from this study may be helpful to families homeschooling in other states. It may also be helpful to school districts in other states (Dahm, 1996; Barrett, 2003, Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1999).
Ethical Issues

This study offered minimal threats to participants. All interviews were with consenting adults. Since interviews were conducted in homes with children, there was incidental contact with minors, but it was always in the presence of the parents. I was careful to omit from the transcripts incidental interaction that took place with children during the interviews. Confidentiality and the lack of identifying information also helped to minimize risk to human participants. All references in the interview transcripts to names and identifying locations were omitted, abbreviated or replaced with an identification code to ensure confidentiality. The signed informed consent forms as well as electronic files of the interview recordings and the transcripts are being stored in a locked cabinet in my office. The materials related to this study will be stored securely for three years according to the requirements of Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board.

Because the issues being explored in this study are often associated with strong feelings and opinions, it could pose potential conflict with my own personal feelings and opinions. The most intense issue is that of joining with the school district or of remaining independent from the school district. I have been clear to point out that I have had children in my own family who would fit into both of these categories. Thus personal experience has helped to reduce bias in this case. Also, professional experience has been helpful in balancing my perspective and helping to reduce bias. I have worked with numerous families from both groups: those who work with the district resources and those who remain independent from the district.

Another potential ethical issue is the temptation of any researcher to try to make
the data say what he or she wants it to say. This temptation can be very real; however, I have established a position of personal and professional ethics, which would be violated by yielding to that temptation. Manipulating a study’s results would not be truthful, and I try to communicate truth in love at all times. Another tenet in my ethical position is my desire to work with excellence in all things. Tampering with the results, interpretations, or applications of a study would violate my standard of excellence.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The research study reported here examined the problem that parents homeschooling children with special education needs (SEN) are faced with the decision of engaging with their school district for support services. The purpose of this study was to examine how homeschooling parents in Pennsylvania make the determination to engage with public school districts to accommodate the SEN of their children. This chapter is organized in terms of the five guiding questions posed in Chapter 1. It first reports the most common reasons given for homeschooling a child with SEN. It then reports most common services utilized both from local school districts and from private resources. Finally, it reports reasons parents have for choosing either to identify their child as having SEN or to have their child remain unidentified as having SEN in documentation submitted to the school district.

Guiding Question 1

What are the most common reasons for homeschooling a child with special education needs? This guiding question had the broadest scope of all the guiding questions and it included information elicited by interview questions 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. This guiding question examined reasons for homeschooling a child with SEN and analyzed other factors influencing those reasons. Issues examined were as follows: (a) reasons for beginning to homeschool, (b) reasons for continuing to homeschool, (c) the dynamics of the child’s SEN, (d) curricula chosen, (e) the child’s progress, (f) interaction with other families homeschooling children with SEN, and (g) points of
satisfaction and frustration from the parents’ perspectives.

Homeschoolers can be loosely divided into two categories based on their original reasons for homeschooling: the negative exit category and the positive entry category (Ray, 1997). The former consists of families choosing homeschooling mainly to remove their child from certain disadvantages of institutionalized schools, yet often hoping to re-enroll at a later date (Rothermel, 2003); conversely, the latter consists of families choosing homeschooling primarily for what they see as its advantages (Ray, 1997). As indicated in Figure 3, the families in this study were almost equally divided between the two categories. The families were also equally divided between those who had at some point sent some of their children to traditional school and those who had always homeschooled all their children (see Table 1).

Table 1

School Status of Siblings with No Special Education Needs (SEN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Composition of Homeschooling</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeschool all school-aged children regardless of SEN</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL children in family have SEN (3 with multiple siblings, 1 only child)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeschool only children with SEN (siblings in traditional school)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have always homeschooled all children</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have sent some or all children to school at some time</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents often have one set of reasons for beginning to homeschool, yet another set of reasons evolves for continuing to homeschool (Rothermel, 2003). Closer examination was made into specific reasons why each family originally chose to homeschool, and then reasons why they are continuing to homeschool. As reflected by the two basic categories, the negative exit families unanimously cited frustrations or struggles with traditional schools as their primary reason for beginning to homeschool. Two of these families specified the desire to remove the children from social stresses in their traditional school placements. Eleven families removed their child from public school. Four families removed their child from protestant Christian school, and one family removed their child from Catholic school.

The next largest category, as indicated in Figure 4, consisted of positive entry families citing reasons such as an inner conviction, a leading from the Lord, a desire to be with their children, and a desire to be the primary influence on their children. Four
families initially were interested in sending their children to a Christian school but found limited options, due to geographic limitations or limitations in services offered to students with SEN, so they chose homeschooling instead. Two families extolled the flexibility of homeschooling, both in schedule and in curricular choices. Five families mentioned that they began homeschooling tentatively, intending to enroll or re-enroll their children in traditional school at a later date.

Figure 4. Reasons for beginning to homeschool.

This study then examined the families’ reasons for continuing to homeschool, not only their children with SEN but also their children without SEN as well. Table 1 indicates the distribution of families that have siblings attending school and families that are homeschooling all school-aged children. Of the 22 families homeschooling all children, three families started out just homeschooling their children with SEN, and then expanded to include all their school-aged children. As indicated in Figure 5, these families’ reasons to continue homeschooling often differed from their reasons to begin homeschooling, supporting the literature (Rothermel, 2003). While the largest category
of reasons to begin homeschooling were based on negative situations, the only negative reasons given for continuing were based on actual concern for the child’s ability to succeed in a traditional environment. The number of families sensing an inner conviction to continue homeschooling increased from 12 to 15. Fifteen families also noted their appreciation for the flexibility in addressing learning styles, curriculum choices, and scheduling. Seven families commented on the positive influence of the family bond resulting from their new homeschooling lifestyle. Two families specifically pointed out that they were pleased with the progress their child with SEN was showing.

\[\text{Figure 5. Reasons for continuing to homeschool.}\]

When comparing the two categories of families and analyzing both their reasons for beginning and their reasons for continuing, Figure 6 gives some interesting insight. Ten of the 16 positive entry families cited the same reasons for continuing as they did for starting. Conversely, only two negative exit families noted their reason for continuing was the same as their reason for starting. However, of that same negative exit group, 11 reported different reasons for continuing when compared to why they started, whereas only six of the 16 positive entry families had different reasons for continuing. The two
families, who indicated their original reason was to remove their child from stress in school, were satisfied with the stress reduction and continued to homeschool for different reasons. At the time of the interview, one family was getting ready to launch their first week of homeschooling after several years of researching and planning. Therefore, they were still concentrating on their reasons for starting, and were not yet considering reasons for continuing.

![Figure 6. Comparing reasons for beginning and continuing. The number of families in this comparison is not equal to the total number of families in the study, because one family was just beginning to homeschool the week of the interview, and had no reasons to give for continuing.]

A closer examination of the participants and the various reasons given for homeschooling children with SEN provided even further insight into what motivates parents to assume a seemingly daunting task. The diversity of the special needs among the 46 SEN students being homeschooled in participating families is worth probing as indicated in Figure 7. Included among the category of learning disabilities are dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, as well as visual processing and auditory processing problems. Among the physical issues are diabetes, dystonia, and eosinophilic
esophagitis. Within the deaf/hard of hearing category, some students wore hearing aids and some had cochlear implants, with some using only oral/aural communication and others using both speech and sign language. This diversity lends insight into the range of reasons for homeschooling.

Figure 7. Diversity of special education needs (SEN) in participating families. The total is greater than 100% because some students have multiple diagnoses.

Reflecting on the reasons for homeschooling children with SEN mentioned in Figures 4 and 5, the interviews delved even deeper into several. The first is individualization. One key aspect involving individualization is curriculum choice. The families shared an array of their choices for materials for each subject as indicated in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The curricular materials mentioned often represented repeated trial and error with a plethora of programs before finding something that brought notable results. In overall curriculum choices, indicated in Table 2, some families preferred utilizing textbooks, either staying with one particular publisher or making eclectic choices among publishers. The majority of participating families preferred an even
broader eclectic approach, developing a *mish mosh* or a casserole, as some referred to their selection process, drawing from a variety of philosophies and publishers. Among curricular choices for math, three particular programs stood out, with a wide array of other programs being picked by individual families (see Table 3). Parents liked DVD or CD resources to assist with teaching along with manipulatives.

**Table 2**

*Overall Curriculum Selection Preferences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eclectic approach</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Mason methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More visual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer textbooks</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3**

*Curricular Preferences for Math*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Math-U-See</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Teaching Textbooks</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Saxon</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Alpha Omega</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>SRA Math</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Right Start Math</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Life of Fred</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Math on the Level</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social studies programs, including history, geography, and civics, ranged from textbooks, some with accompanying teaching videos, to timelines, lapbooks, and unit studies. Lapbooks are graphic organizers created around a theme being studied and can
be homemade or be assembled from commercially produced graphic organizing materials. Some parents created their own unit studies while others purchased them from publishers (see Table 4).

Table 4

Curricular Preferences for Social Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit studies</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KONOS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery of History</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Travelers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonlight</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Jones</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timelines</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Beka (Textbooks &amp; DVDs)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District textbooks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapbooks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switched-On Schoolhouse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Time for Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the other subjects, science programs varied as well. Worldview was important to some families and non-essential to others. Some programs included video instruction, while others were primarily hands-on. Several families used a unit study approach for science as well, but fewer publishers were mentioned for this subject area (see Table 5).
Table 5

Curricular Preferences for Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit studies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KONOS units</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologia</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Switched-On Schoolhouse</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District textbooks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Considering God’s Creation</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Answers in Genesis</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By far, the most detailed curricular choices were given for Language Arts, which included reading, spelling, grammar, composition, and literature (see Table 6). Of particular interest are the materials developed to address dyslexia. Language Arts exemplifies why flexibility is needed in individualization for addressing SEN. One family was so impressed with the results of the Orton-Gillingham method, which was used in a clinic their son attended, that they made sacrifices to purchase it for themselves and to receive training. One participant explained how she uses her homemade flashcards, making each syllable in a different bright color. She also was interested to share that the flashcards worked even with spelling the words backwards, which works well with some right-brain learners (Freed & Parsons, 1997).
Table 6

Curricular Preferences for Language Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Arts</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACE Paces</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemade flashcards(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write Shop</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Manna</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGuffeys, old English books, classic literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Curriculum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Homeschool</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shurley English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Omega Life Pacs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switched-On Schoolhouse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Puppets (phonics)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orton-Gillingham method (dyslexia)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Grammar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Leaps (fluency)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earobics (phonemic awareness)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Milestones</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Mason</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell to Write and Read</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Jones</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All About Spelling (for dyslexia)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Power</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Based on methods found in Freed & Parsons (1997)

In addition to individualization, some parents stated that student progress was a key motivator for continuing to homeschool their children with SEN. In the interviews, parents made 32 positive comments related to the progress their children with SEN were making. Interestingly, 50% of those positive comments mentioned the idea of progress being slow, or referred to the need for adjusted pace.

Seven parents mentioned noteworthy concerns about their children’s progress or future. One mother repeatedly expressed concern over the slow pace of her child’s progress. Another mother mentioned that she is worried for her son’s future. Still
another was concerned about her child’s self-esteem. Similar to those parents’ concerns, one parent shared that she and her husband were battling the student’s discouragement and his wanting to give up. One mother noted concern about children being compared with other children. Taking a different perspective, one mother expressed concern over her own lack of training, sometimes doubting herself. Finally, one parent shared her concern for her son’s struggle to bond socially with other children, which she felt was related to his diagnosis of being on the autism spectrum.

The issue of socialization warranted further investigation. Many families explained their children’s involvement with church activities or groups like 4-H. For the purposes of this study, I asked each family about their level of interaction with other homeschoolers (see Table 7). Levels of interaction ranged from no contact with other homeschoolers to active participation in academic homeschool cooperative groups. Four families noted that homeschool support groups tended to be less satisfying as their children got older. Some attributed that to the academic intensity of high school requirements overshadowing the light socialization of earlier years.

Table 7

*Interaction with Other Homeschoolers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeschool Support Groups</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-op with classes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal gatherings with other homeschool families</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact, but seldom activities, focus on home</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with other homeschoolers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-one families reported that within their homeschool groups there were other families homeschooling children with SEN. Yet, seven families noted they were
not aware of any other children with SEN in their cooperative groups (see Figure 8). Three families commented that parental teaching demands at cooperative groups precluded time for sharing about the challenges of homeschooling children with SEN. Two parents shared that the topic of discussing children having SEN was taboo among their homeschooling colleagues. Sensing a level of frustration among these parents, I asked if the homeschool cooperative groups served as a source of support for the parents. As indicated in Table 8, only eight of the 27 parents responding to that question felt satisfied with the level of support in their homeschool cooperative groups regarding homeschooling children with SEN.

![Figure 8. Level of interaction with other families homeschooling special education needs (SEN).]
Table 8

Level of Support for Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs Found in Homeschool Co-ops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Support in Co-ops</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, other homeschoolers not in formal co-op</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in co-op</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressed need/desire for more contact/support</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One final area related to exploring reasons or motivations for homeschooling children with SEN was that of comparing the parents’ areas of greatest satisfaction and greatest frustration. Table 9 captures the six main categories of satisfaction and shows brief excerpts from parents’ comments. Some responses were complex and could be split among several categories, so the total number exceeds the number of families participating in this study (see Table 9). These categories reflect many of the reasons given both for beginning to homeschool a child with SEN and for continuing to homeschool. Conversely, Table 10 captures the seven main categories of frustration of homeschooling a child with SEN as experienced by the participants. The majority of the observations related to satisfaction are child-focused, but a large portion of the frustrations are parent-focused.

Table 9

Greatest Satisfactions in Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Satisfaction</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACHIEVEMENT</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see achievement/being part of the achievement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get through whatever hurdles and achieve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when they finally get it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know what he’s accomplished and I feel solid in that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
able to achieve
see the light bulb click, I get to be a part of it
he got it!
when they finally get something
just seeing them get it
when your kid learns to read
I achieved something and they achieved it

PROGRESS 7
we’re making progress
see her progress and to know what she’s learning
the progress that they made
seeing them progress
his self-awareness
gotten it done AND you feel like the child learned
little steps of progress together

PROTECTION 7
doesn’t have to face the constant failure every day
see him smile
come to me comfortably
I don’t get called by the school on a daily basis!
we don’t have to deal with bullying
so nice to not have all this anxiety in our house
knowing they’re not getting lost (academically & belittled)

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION 7
tailor his education
customize it to their needs
tailor things for them
really try to tailor
making sure that their needs are met
we can tailor things
being able to customize everything

TIME TOGETHER 4
being with my kids
more time as a family
being with them
bond that I can have being with them

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT 2
grow in so many different ways with his character
a godly schooling
Table 10

**Greatest Frustrations in Homeschooling a Child with Special Education Needs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Frustration</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OVERWHELMING SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the daily, the demands, all of it together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it’s just a lot of time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just how long our days take</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convince them they need to wear their hearing aids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>figure out what some of their needs are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t get it all done that I’d like to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel like it’s just an uphill struggle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what I’ve got to do to prepare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one else does it (all on my shoulders)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t get a break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMANDS &amp; STRESS OF SEN</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when they don’t get something</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when they still don’t get it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not seeing the academic process at a pace I would like to see</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the difference in timeline (when learning occurs vs. when expected)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how long it takes sometimes for things to gel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light bulb’s not coming on… you got other things to do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not being able to fix it quickly for them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF-DOUBT</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you have doubts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question myself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if I feel I’m not giving him enough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it's all on my shoulders, if I fail, they fail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my own inadequacies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGAGING THE CHILD</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>getting him get his work started</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivate some of the kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his unwillingness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arguing with him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he was becoming more obstinate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVITY FROM OTHERS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THINGS NOT GOING AS PLANNED
   house renovations

TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THE LAW
   trying to figure things out in the beginning (The Law)

Guiding Question 2

What are the most common support services provided by the school district? This guiding question was answered in participants’ responses to interview questions 5, 6, 7, and 8. As stated in Chapter 2, homeschooling families may request special education services from the district, but both district officials and homeschooling parents must be in agreement for the family to be able to access services (The Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law, 1988). I asked the 30 families participating in this research study what services from their local school district they were utilizing. These families represent 23 different school districts from around the state of Pennsylvania. As indicated in Table 11, only three of the 30 families are utilizing services from their districts of residence. One of these students is involved in sports, which falls under a section of the homeschool law separate from the provisions made for families homeschooling children with SEN. Five other families utilized services in the past, but those services have been discontinued. Four of those five were pre-school services, which are provided under a law other than the homeschool law. At the time of this study, only one of the 30 participating families is receiving special education services from their district of residence. Two families said they are currently investigating what services may be available through their districts. Two families requested help from their districts but were denied. Some families use textbooks from their districts, but that provision is in the law for all homeschooling
families, not just those homeschooling students with SEN, so that was not included in this section’s data.

Table 11

*Services Utilized from the School District of Residence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Services Utilized</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing therapy(^a)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays district sports(^b)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health screenings(^b)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment &amp; reading support/ now discontinued(^c)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool speech at district/now discontinued(^c)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool in home/now discontinued(^c)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)The only current active entry specific to SEN
\(^b\)Current active services, but not specific to SEN
\(^c\)SEN service received in the past but now discontinued

**Guiding Question 3**

*What are the most common support services received from independent resources?* This guiding question was answered in participants’ responses to interview questions 5, 6, and 8. Another important aspect to understand in exploring accommodations for homeschooling children with SEN is whether or not the families are utilizing outside resources, other than the school district, for support services. Utilizing independent resources raises the question of funding for these services. Some families pay out of pocket, while some utilize insurance plans. Table 12 indicates the various accommodations participating families are utilizing that are not provided by their district of residence. Eight families reported that they are not utilizing any services at this time.

More than 30 services or accommodations were mentioned, indicating that some families receive more than one. Interestingly, one family purchased a second home to use as a school location, to help their son with autism better be able to separate school time from home time. He previously attended traditional school, so his family felt having
separate locations would ease his transition. One mother considers her homeschool co-op to be a form of accommodation, because the people involved work so well with her son with SEN. Seven families shared that their homeschool evaluators/consultants are a significant support service (see Table 12). These consultants provide valuable guidance about homeschooling a child with SEN.

Table 12

*Services Received from Independent Resources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Not from the District</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None at the moment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeschool consultant</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal research</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatric neurologist</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuro-developmental Consultant NACD</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiologist</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational therapy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision therapy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masonic Dyslexia Program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist – testing/therapist -</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased second home for school location</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeschool support group</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical treatment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement disorder clinic consultation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When families utilize services from resources other than their school district of residence, they must consider how these services will be funded (see Figure 9). When added together, private insurance and state medical assistance insurance comprise the largest means for funding independent services and accommodations. Several families
tapped into behavioral support services available through the Medical Access card. Two found the service frustrating saying that the Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS) personnel assigned to them did not blend well with their family, and so they discontinued the service. One mother, however, extolled the program in her county, and she depends on this support service to help her balance the needs of her three children on the autism spectrum.

![Bar chart showing funding sources for independent resources.](image)

*Figure 9. Funding sources for independent resources.*

The next major funding source is families paying out of pocket, which could be a hindrance for families who cannot afford these resources. One mother shared that her daughter has not yet received a formal diagnosis of SEN. The process was delayed due to the financial burden and insurance issues with changing providers, but she stated that the diagnostic process will be back on track soon. Another mother reported that she would like to take her daughter back for more vision therapy, but her family does not have health insurance, and the out-of-pocket costs are prohibitive.

Some services are available at no cost to the family. The Office of Vocational
Rehabilitation (OVR) is a good resource for seniors in high school and those who are transitioning to work or post-secondary education. One family appreciated OVR’s help with purchasing new hearing aids and with tuition for cosmetology school. Another mother reported that a lady in her church, who is a retired teacher, noticed their family homeschooling multiple children, including one with SEN. That lady approached her, asking how she could help, and now she provides private tutoring as a ministry at no charge. Some families found a free resource in the Masonic Lodge’s dyslexia clinics. Although one family found this resource in their town to be life-changing, a family in another town found it to be frustrating with the inconsistency among tutors. Another family was pleased with free tutoring they received from a nearby university.

Tax-sheltered medical flex plans provided by some employers were another funding resource available. One family found that by having their son formally diagnosed, they are able to pay out of their flex plan for some therapy services not normally covered by insurance.

Discussing independent resources and the issue of funding led naturally into another of the interview questions, which asked what services they would like to receive that they were not currently receiving. As indicated in Table 13, 10 families were satisfied with their current level of services. Several families expressed their desire for some kind of financial relief, mostly in the form of tax credits, because they are not sending their child to district classes but are paying taxes in addition to their own curriculum expenses. One family, who borrows textbooks from the district, expressed a need for help with purchasing paper and printer ink. She understood that the law only mandates the districts to lend non-consumable materials and does not require the lending
of teacher’s manuals, tests, or answer keys. Yet, she tried to produce similar study materials for each of her children, thus using large quantities of paper and printer ink. One family expressed a desire to purchase a laptop for each of her children.

Table 13

*What Services Would You Like to Receive That You Are Not Receiving Now?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services They Would Like to Receive</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t desire anything more.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance/tax relief/paper supplies/ink/laptops</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s aide/helper</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career guidance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest-based group for socialization</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom support group for SEN HS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapy for child to deal with fear issues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put in school for 1 week, so he can appreciate homeschooling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision therapy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing therapy in home even after pre-school years, less time wasted</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysgraphia support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mother of the one family who does utilize services from their school district expressed appreciation that her preschool children can still receive in-home preschool services. Although her school-aged children receive services from the same therapist, her school district adheres to the specifics of the law which state when both district and family are agreeable, the family may receive SEN services on district property. This arrangement requires the therapist to complete the preschool services in the home, and then both the therapist and the family pack up and re-locate to the local school building to continue the therapy for the school-aged children. This mother, while appreciative, feels that being allowed to segue right into therapy with the school-aged children, while
the therapist was already set up in the home, would be more practical and expedient.

**Guiding Question 4**

*Why do some homeschooling families choose to have their children formally identified as needing special education services in documentation to the district?* The answer to this guiding question was extracted from responses to interview question 4. One additional important aspect to understand in exploring accommodations for homeschooling children with SEN is whether or not the families formally identified these children in the documentation to their school district of residence according to the provisions set forth in the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988). As stated in Chapter 1, Pennsylvania’s law (1988) requires that, “any student who has been identified pursuant to the provisions of the Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 91-230, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.) as needing special education services” may be homeschooled as long as a certified special education teacher or licensed school psychologist approves the program. Therefore, families who desire to seek support services from their school district must have their children formally identified as having SEN and must disclose that identification in their documentation to the school district. Children who have attended district programs and have had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are already identified as having SEN; therefore, they technically fall under this documentation category. Ten families’ school districts of residence have been aware of these families having children with SEN, some with IEPs and some just due to consultation with the district.

As indicated in Figure 10, six of the 30 participating families have chosen to identify their child as having SEN in their documentation to the school district. All six of
these families had at least one of their children with SEN previously enrolled in district classes. Therefore, when these families filed their first homeschool affidavit, the district was already aware of the children’s SEN and the families followed the steps delineated in the law for homeschooling children who were previously identified. Included in this group is the one family receiving SEN services from the district.

![Pie chart showing 60% of families identify child with SEN in documentation, 20% do not identify, and 20% do not identify or have semi-understanding.]

*Figure 10.* Differentiation of which families identify in documentation to their school district that their child has special education needs (SEN) and which families do not identify this in their documentation to the district.

I coded the families’ level of awareness of the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) and found the families fit into three categories: those with an understanding of the law, those with a semi-understanding of the law, and those unsure of the law. Of the 30 participating families, 50% were unsure of the law, 33% were inaccurate in some key points of the law, and 17% were accurate in their understanding of the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (see Figure 11). Two of the six families formally identifying in their documentation to the school districts their children as having SEN were in the
category of understanding the law, two families were in the category of semi-understanding the law, and two were in the category of being unsure of the law (see Figure 12).

Figure 11. Levels of understanding of the PA law as it pertains to homeschooling children with special education needs (SEN).

Figure 12. Comparing the levels of understanding of the law among the families who identify their children as having special education needs (SEN) with those who do not identify their children as having SEN in their documentation to their school district.
Guiding Question 5

Why do some homeschooling families prefer to have their children remain unidentified as needing special education services in documentation to the district? The fifth guiding question of this study is closely related to the fourth guiding question, and was also addressed in interview question 4. As stated in Chapter 1, parents homeschooling children who have been identified as having SEN are required to take an extra step by having their educational objectives pre-approved by a certified special education teacher or psychologist. Some families consider this extra step to be an undue burden, especially if they reside in a school district which has been traditionally adversarial towards homeschooling. Children who have never attended district programs, may not have been formally identified in district records as having SEN, technically allowing the parents to forego this extra step in documentation.

As indicated in Figure 10, 24 of the 30 participating families opted to not identify their children as having SEN in their documentation to the district, even if the child had been formally diagnosed by a private resource. Twenty-three percent of the participating families have not had any of their children with SEN formally diagnosed, but they fit the criteria for being struggling learners and were eligible to participate in this study (see Figure 13). The parents in the 77% of participating families who have at least one child formally diagnosed had to make a decision whether or not to identify the SEN in their documentation to the district.
Figure 13. Comparison of participating families with at least 1 child with a formal diagnosis to families with no children with a formal diagnosis.

The diagnosing entity partially influenced this decision (see Table 14). If a professional at the school made the initial diagnosis or screened the child and referred for further testing and diagnosis, then the school district would already have the child identified as having SEN. Conversely, if the family sought testing and diagnosis from a private resource, then the child’s SEN were not necessarily identified in the school district’s documentation. Four families reported that although their district is aware of their child’s SEN, with some having been enrolled in district special education programs, the district does not require them to take the extra step of having their educational objectives pre-approved. Looking again at the three categories of understanding of the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988), among the families who do not identify their child’s SEN in documentation to their school districts, three families had an accurate understanding of the law, eight families had a semi-accurate understanding of the law, and 13 were unsure of the requirements in the law (see Figure 12).
Table 14

Determining the Diagnosing Entity for Those Children Formally Diagnosed as Having Special Education Needs (SEN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who Diagnosed the SEN?</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional/private</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No diagnosing entity</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Total exceeds the number of participant families, because some families had multiple children with SEN and utilized different diagnosing entities among children.*

During the interviews, I asked participating families to share their reasons for choosing to have their children with SEN remain unidentified in documentation to the district. As indicated in Figure 14, the main reason given was that families wanted minimal interaction with their school districts. Others shared that they did not want to go through the extra steps of the additional requirements of having their program pre-approved by a certified special education teacher. Some families never considered the possibility for needing documentation different from children with no SEN. Two families requested services from their school districts but were denied.

*Figure 14. Reasons given for not identifying special education needs (SEN) in*
documentation to the school district.

One mother shared that even though her children were not identified in documentation to the district, three of them have received formal diagnoses, which helped establish the necessary documentation to begin working with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). As mentioned earlier, this mother shared that OVR has been very helpful to her family. Another family never sought a formal diagnosis for their son, and the family also never identified him as having SEN in their documentation to the district. Recently, he decided to pursue post-secondary education, and is working now with OVR. Because he had never received a formal diagnosis, he needed extensive testing and documentation to establish his need for accommodative services.

To supplement the information gleaned from this study’s five guiding questions, I also asked the participants what advice they would give to other families considering homeschooling a child with SEN. Their advice was able to be divided into four categories: getting started; developing a philosophy and approach; creating an action plan; and gathering support. These categories of advice are displayed in Table 15.
Table 15

Four Categories of Advice for Future Homeschooling Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Getting started  = 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examine your motives &amp; commitment to HS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research lots!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use discernment with others' advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go with your gut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep going.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing a philosophy and approach = 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk with God!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This child is given to you from God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is how God made them, not a mistake/error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray &amp; consider best for your child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualize for each child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate the positive/focus on strengths.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creating an action plan = 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just relax!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be open minded to change when it's not working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be as patient as the good Lord will help you to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't play the comparison game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think outside the box.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise their efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition, repetition, repetition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities, not just bookwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take care of mom, get proper rest!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gathering support = 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draw support from other homeschoolers, in person or online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even seek support from the school if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check out private services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get involved in homeschool group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network with other parents of children with SEN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for help if you need it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further supplement the information aligning with this study’s five guiding questions, I gleaned additional tidbits from the participants. Their responses to the
inquiry of sharing anything else they would like share yielded suggestions divided in three categories. Table 16 addresses the category of resources or suggestions related to homeschooling children with SEN. Table 17 focuses more specifically on thoughts for coping with SEN, and can really be subdivided into three areas: spiritual, relational, and motivational. Finally Table 18 presents a few participants’ thoughts about their homeschool evaluator/consultant’s role and represents at least three different evaluators.

Table 16

*Resources or Suggestions for Homeschooling Children with Special Education Needs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources/suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another thing that’s really important is that both parents have to be on board with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If we could start a support group, I’d love to be a part of that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage people to go ahead and spend the extra ten bucks a month for HSLDA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn the learning style of your child. Learn what options there are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get aptitude testing per child if possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homeschool Legal Defense has told me that I live in one of, if not the, most difficult districts in PA. The district routinely ask me to do things that are out of compliance with the homeschool law. And I don’t feel like I want to call any more attention because I don’t want anything from them. I don’t want services from them. So I don’t want to feel like I want to call any more attention to our particular case than we need to.

As a parent you have to try to find some time that’s not focused totally on your kid, too, because it’s very easy with a needy kid to be all-consumed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping with SEN</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The SEN maybe came as a surprise to me and my husband, but not to God.</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer is a very important part</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s the way God made him and He made him that way for a reason.</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s a such great privilege and opportunity to homeschool your children, not only of course obviously academics, but just to be together as a family and to be able to instill biblical values into your children and to show them that learning comes from the Lord, and that we can do nothing apart from Him.</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you have a child that has special needs or has difficulty learning, sometimes it can be very discouraging. And you just need to remember that God has a purpose in this, and it’s not for waste and it’s not a mistake. It’s just the way it is and each child has their own special purpose and their own special place in God’s plan.</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But, by doing the homeschooling, you get to spend more time with your kid, and you get to see him grow. And you get to see the results of everything. Homeschooling special needs is a journey together. You’re linked and you do it together.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My husband and I have often said with our child with special needs, that we would not be half the parents we are if it wasn’t for him. Just take one day at a time. That’s all you can do. You know they’re learning. Every day is a learning experience. And not only are they learning, it’s the bonding that’s special.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think dealing with things like G__ being born deaf. It’s a lot easier to take when you feel like you’re a unit. I feel like we’re one, we’re a family. We’re not disjointed. We’re not spending huge amounts of time apart. We’re a lot closer than we were two years ago.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult at times and challenging and sometimes overwhelming. You know but it’s worth it.</td>
<td>Motivational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely the support helped me just to see the big picture and not to be so worried about things.</td>
<td>Motivational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think diet and getting enough sleep are really important</td>
<td>Motivational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t care if it takes you till you’re 35, I’m never going to give up teaching you to read. We will get this. I’m never going to give up on you.” He was 12. The next year, wow, we made progress reading.</td>
<td>Motivational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Don’t sell yourself short. Don’t just say you can’t do it.

There’s a lot of humility for the parent and the child, when there’s special needs. Nobody really wants to be there. And it’s not easy. No. It’s not what you want. And he doesn’t either.

And the fun part is that when you learn all these things, you can share it with other people that are behind you coming up, that are pulling their hair out and crying. And you can comfort them and pray with them and you can hold them and say, you can make it.

Times I wanted to give up, and doubts that fill your mind, but the advantages that definitely outweigh the disadvantages.

Table 18

Appreciating the Support Available Through Some Homeschool Evaluators/Consultants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appreciation for Role of Evaluator/Consultant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My evaluator has been very helpful in helping me understand what the law is and what my responsibilities are. And I think even my school district has no clue about what the law is and what my responsibilities are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But I feel very blessed to have come in contact with you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So I think that God has put you in our lives for a purpose at this time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’ve been given a lot of misinformation in the past, until our new evaluator corrected our misconceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main help is our evaluator. She has a couple children who are also on the spectrum, and just a good resource to bounce things off of, and just has a good grasp of the law and what kids need. Good grasp of just being able to say, no, you’re on the right track.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love my evaluator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results presented above suggest that although the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) allows for homeschooling families to receive SEN services from their districts of residence, the majority of the families choose not to. They often utilize services from independent resources instead. Therefore, many families choose not to identify their child as having SEN in their documentation to their school districts. A
more detailed summary and a discussion of the findings are presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This final chapter restates the research problem and reviews the major methods used in this study. The main sections of this chapter summarize the results and discuss their implications.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is parents homeschooling children with special education needs (SEN) in Pennsylvania are faced with the dilemma of engaging with their school district for support services. The Pennsylvania law (1988) states that, “any student who has been identified pursuant to the provisions of the Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 91-230, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.) as needing special education services” may be homeschooled as long as a certified special education teacher or licensed school psychologist approves the program. No other homeschooling student in Pennsylvania is required to have his program pre-approved. Therefore, some families prefer to have their struggling learners remain unidentified in their documentation to the school district. They then may choose to seek support services for their children through private resources rather than requesting help from the school district. Consequently, this presents the question of funding for these services.

Review of the Methodology

As explained in Chapter 3, this study used a hermeneutic phenomenological design, focusing on the essence of the experience of homeschooling a child with SEN from the perspective of the participants. Taking a qualitative perspective, this study attempted to discern the meaning of the experiences to the participants. The study relied
on interviews with 30 parents homeschooling children with SEN in the state of Pennsylvania. The interviews were flexibly structured and were based on interview questions from a previous nation-wide study that were adapted for this study’s focus on the specifics of the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988). The interviews took place in a location of the participants’ choosing, either in their homes, my home, or an alternative location specified by the participants. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed for analysis using the constant comparative method of data analysis.

**Summary of the Results**

This study was based on five guiding questions. Each of the 15 interview questions was anchored in one or more of the guiding questions. The results of the study are therefore organized according to the guiding questions.

**Guiding question 1.** *What are the most common reasons for homeschooling a child with SEN?* This guiding question had the broadest scope of all the guiding questions and it included information elicited by interview questions 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. This guiding question examined reasons for homeschooling a child with SEN and analyzed other factors influencing those reasons. Issues examined were as follows: (a) reasons for beginning to homeschool, (b) reasons for continuing to homeschool, (c) the dynamics of the child’s SEN, (d) curricula chosen, (e) the child’s progress, (f) interaction with other families homeschooling children with SEN, and (g) points of satisfaction and frustration from the parents’ perspectives.

The 30 families were easily divided into two groups according to their original motivations for homeschooling: negative exit, removing the children from perceived negative experiences in traditional schools; and positive entry, embracing homeschooling
for the perceived advantages inherent in the growing educational option (Ray, 1997).

These two groups were balanced among the 30 participating families, with 47% in the negative exit group and 53% in the positive entry group. Prior to the interviews, all but one of the positive entry families had always homeschooled all of their children. All of the negative exit families and one positive entry family had at some point sent some or all of their children to a traditional school. A closer examination of their actual reasons behind these motivations showed the two reasons most often cited were to remove their children from negative experiences in traditional school (negative exit group) and to follow an inner urging or conviction (positive entry group). Two other reasons cited less frequently were limitations in Christian school programs and the flexibility of homeschooling.

For the negative entry group, reasons for continuing to homeschool often differed from reasons to begin homeschooling. Conversely, for the positive entry group, the reasons to continue were more likely related to their reasons to begin. The two most frequent reasons cited within both groups were an increased inner conviction to homeschool and the ability to individualize the children’s programs. Several families cited the closer family bond as their reason to continue homeschooling. Some families continued due to their concern that their children may continue to struggle if re-enrolled in traditional school.

An examination of the children’s specific SEN not only provided insight into the diversity of the study’s population, but also into some of the issues influencing the decision to homeschool. The diversity of the needs among the 46 SEN students being homeschooled in participating families included learning disabilities, deaf/hard of
hearing, autism spectrum, attention deficit disorders, physical issues, and Tourette’s Syndrome, listed in order of the size of each group from largest to smallest. This diversity among SEN gives insight into why the parents listed flexibility and individualization as reasons to homeschool. One of the ways families chose to individualize was in their selection of curricular materials. While a few families chose one main program for all subjects, most participants chose an eclectic approach, varying curricula to meet their children’s individual needs. With their curriculum addressing their children’s SEN, 32 positive comments were given about the children’s progress, albeit half of those mentioned that progress was slow, but still noticeable.

Most families have had contact with other families homeschooling children with SEN, but nine families have not; in fact, three families stated they have no contact with other homeschoolers. Participants associated their greatest sense of satisfaction with homeschooling in seeing their children achieve and progress. However, they reported their greatest sense of frustration stemmed from the immense responsibility on their own shoulders. Interestingly, the satisfaction was child-related and the frustration was parent-related.

Guiding question 2. What are the most common support services received from school districts? This guiding question was answered in participants’ responses to interview questions 5, 6, 7, and 8. Of the 30 participating families, representing 23 different school districts, only one family was receiving SEN services from the school district at the time of the study. One other family had received services in the past. The service utilized at the time of the study was hearing therapy and was delivered at a district facility. Two families tapped into school district resources unrelated to SEN. One
student in the study played on district sports teams. Another utilized health screening services provided by the school nurse.

**Guiding question 3.** *What are the most common support services received from independent resources?* This guiding question was answered in participants’ responses to interview questions 5, 6, and 8. Eight families reported not receiving any outside services. Eight families reported receiving speech therapy. Seven families considered the guidance in information provided by their homeschool consultant to be a source of support. Many parents found support through their own personal research on how to best address their children’s SEN. Five families utilized tutors, and another five families received services from pediatric neurologists. An array of additional support services were utilized on a smaller scale. Funding for all of these varied services was provided by private or public insurance for 18 families, out of pocket for nine families, and gratis for five families. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and a private medical flex account were also sources of funding for some families.

**Guiding question 4.** *Why do some homeschooling families choose to have in documentation to the district their children formally identified as needing special education services?* The answer to this guiding question was extracted from responses to interview question 4. Of the participating families, 20% identified in their documentation to the school district their children as having SEN. These families all had withdrawn at least one of their children from district special education programs, knowing that the district was already aware of their children’s SEN. Included in this group is the family who is continuing to receive SEN services from their school district. These six families were divided evenly among the three identified levels of knowledge of the Pennsylvania
Homeschooling Law (1988) and its particulars about homeschooling children with SEN. Two families had a good understanding of the law; two had a semi-understanding of the law; and two were not familiar with the specifics of the law.

Guiding question 5. Why do some homeschooling families prefer to have in documentation to the district their children remain unidentified as needing special education services? The answer to this guiding question was also extracted from responses to interview question 4. Of the 30 participating families, 24 opted to not identify their child as having SEN when they submitted their documentation to the school district. Some of these families, while observing their children struggle with learning at a normal pace or with traditional instructional methods, never had their children formally tested to get a formal diagnosis for their children’s source of learning struggles. Among those who had their child tested and diagnosed, the diagnosing or referring entity influenced the families’ decision for whether to identify or not identify their children’s SEN in documentation to the district. If someone from the district either made the diagnosis or referred the child for testing which resulted in a diagnosis, then the identification was already known to the district. These families identified the child as having an SEN in future documentation, which required them to go the extra step and have their program pre-approved. Yet, if the families had their children diagnosed by a private resource, then they kept the information private and did not identify the child as having SEN in their documentation to the district.

The main reason given for allowing the child to remain unidentified in district documentation was to avoid interaction with the district. Other families reported wanting to avoid having to take the extra step of having a special education teacher or
psychologist pre-approve their educational objectives. Three families said they never gave it consideration, which reflects back on their awareness of the specifics of the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988). Two families sought support services from the district and were denied, so they proceeded to not identify their children’s SEN in documentation. Even though the district was aware, they never mentioned the lack of identification in the documentation.

Additional results. During the interviews, I asked each of the participants what advice they would give to other families considering homeschooling children with SEN. Their advice fell into four categories: getting started; developing a philosophy and approach; creating an action plan; and gathering support. Families also shared additional tidbits of information which fell into the following categories: (a) homeschooling children with SEN, (b) coping with the actual SEN, and (c) an examination of the role played by the homeschool evaluator or consultant.

Discussion of the Results

To better understand the implications of this study’s results, a reflection back to the review of literature found in Chapter 2 is indicated. This discussion will examine the results summarized by the guiding questions and will connect relevant results with the literature.

Guiding question 1. What are the most common reasons for homeschooling a child with SEN? Ray (1997) distinguished two groups of homeschoolers based on their original reasons for homeschooling: negative exit, removing the children from perceived negative experiences in traditional schools; and positive entry, embracing homeschooling for the perceived advantages inherent in the growing educational option. While Ray was
discussing homeschoolers in general, the families in this study were specifically homeschooling children with special education needs (SEN). The 30 families in this study fit easily into Ray’s two categories. The largest category of reasons given by the families in this study for beginning to homeschool was to remove their children from negative situations in traditional school, corresponding with the negative exit families. The second largest category among reasons for homeschooling children with SEN was parents sensing a leading or a deep desire to be with their children, summarized as *inner conviction*, corresponding with the positive entry families.

I would like to point out that the negative exit families in this study were not removing their children from public schools only. Eleven families removed their child from public school. Four families removed their child from protestant Christian schools, and one family removed their child from Catholic school. The population was representative of several options within the traditional school realm. Some of the positive entry families mentioned that when they initially examined their options, they were considering Christian school, but they encountered limitations either geographically or in services offered, precluding them from sending their children there. This corroborates Bannier’s (2007) and Sutton’s (1993) observations that Christian education has been limited in meeting the needs of children with SEN. Sutton noted that special education is simply individualized education, and many Christian schools are hard pressed by limitations in budget, personnel and material to provide that individualization.

Rothermel (2003) pointed out that many families seek homeschooling as a temporary way to deal with problems that come up in traditional schooling, but often hope to re-enroll their child in traditional school at a later date. Five families in this study
mentioned that they began homeschooling tentatively, intending to enroll or re-enroll their children in traditional school at a later date. Rothermel also found that many parents have one set of reasons for beginning to homeschool, yet another set of reasons evolves for continuing to homeschool. This study found that to be true as well. Twelve of the 14 negative exit families cited different reasons for continuing than they did for beginning to homeschool. Conversely, 10 of the 16 positive entry homeschooling families cited that their reasons for continuing remained the same as for beginning. Therefore, among the families in this study, positive entry families were more apt to continue homeschooling for the same reasons as beginning, but the negative exit families were more apt to have different reasons for continuing than for starting to homeschool.

The number of families sensing an inner conviction to continue homeschooling increased from 12 to 15. One mother who frequently observed one of her sons in a state of intense fear on the school’s playground, withdrew her sons and began homeschooling. The fearful son was later diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum. This mother, who was in the negative exit category for beginning to homeschool, then stated as her reason for continuing to homeschool,

Well, I would say so we can bring the boys up in the admonition of the Lord. I think that’s the most thing… I mean to show them how important a relationship with the Lord is and then to also realize that all of our different things that we’re learning all pertain to Him. That is it’s all His, and that we should be able to give glory to Him for those things. And it’s just, and to help to grow godly young men (Mrs. M, personal communication, August 22, 2011).

Fifteen families also noted their appreciation for the flexibility in addressing
learning styles, curriculum choices, and scheduling, and for being able to individualize their programs. As stated in the review of literature, homeschooling closely models a tutoring approach to teaching, providing either one-on-one or small group instruction (Hensley 2009; Ray, 1997). It allows for a truly individualized approach to education, both in curriculum, meaning what is taught, and in instruction, meaning how it is taught (Hensley 2009; Ray, 1997). Bloom (1984) recognized the value of a tutoring approach to education, calling it the “best learning conditions we can devise” (p. 4).

One example of individualization that homeschooling can provide is the flexibility for short bursts of Academic Engaged Time (AET) throughout the day or evening, without being limited to traditional school hours (Ray, 2002). Another area of flexibility reflects on the freedom of movement presented in Chapter 2. Homeschooling allows students to move around, when that movement enhances their learning (Ray, 2002). One mother shared,

And I could tell, he learned from moving around, instead of sitting still. So instead of sitting at the table and having to write all the time, I might sit at the table, because that’s where I was most comfortable. But he could hear the flock of geese fly over, and run to the door, look at the geese. “Did you see those geese?” And I couldn’t hear them yet, but he could. Come back and I’d say, “Did you hear anything I said?” … He could tell me exactly what I read… But if I would make him sit still, he couldn’t remember it, because… and his comprehension in first grade when he had to sit still was not good, but I think it was like he was like so worried about sitting still that he couldn’t sit still, listen to the teacher, take in what he was supposed to take in, and get it back out on paper.
It was just too much just trying to sit still (Mrs. C, personal communication, August 29, 2011).

Honing in on curriculum choices, four families in this study indicated that they preferred primarily using textbooks, with either one particular publisher or making eclectic choices among publishers. The majority of participating families (25), however, preferred an even broader eclectic approach, drawing from a variety of philosophies and publishers. This ratio of families within this study (25/30) aligns with other studies in the literature. B. D. Ray (2000) pointed out that about 70% of homeschooling parents design their curriculum to fit their individual students. Berens and Statnick (2009) and Meighan (1995) noted that the use of a packaged curriculum with homeschooling children with SEN may require adjustments in pace and may turn out to be overwhelming, suggesting that parents should consider using a blend of materials from various publishers.

Seven families commented on the positive influence of the family bond resulting from their new homeschooling lifestyle. One mother noted,

Homeschooling has been an amazing blessing to our family. I think dealing with things like G__ being born deaf. It’s a lot easier to take when you feel like you’re a unit. The girls are constantly in G__’s face signing to him and talking to him and interacting with him. I feel like we’re one, we’re a family. We’re not disjointed. We’re not spending huge amounts of time apart. We’re a lot closer than we were two years ago (Mrs. U, personal communication, September 7, 2011).

This sense of bonding builds social capital, which was examined in Chapter 2. With social capital, resources are developed within the network of relationships with
families being primary examples (Ray, 1997; Tierney 2006). Social capital increases opportunities for accomplishments that might not otherwise happen, linking social connections with positive outcomes. Social capital includes relational categories such as trust, obligation, bonding, bridging, marginalization issues, and values consistency.

Trust as a form of social capital helps students move through the levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of learning as discussed in Chapter 2. Many students with SEN struggle to move past Maslow’s second level of Safety (Pyles, 2004). They spend so much of their time in the public school setting dealing with security, stability and fear issues that real learning is often impeded. With the security and stability in the home environment, children with SEN can move more quickly to the fourth level of the hierarchy and begin true learning (Pyles, 2004). One mother in this study shared her observations after homeschooling just a few months,

I saw a huge improvement in K__. I saw a lot of confidence being built in her. She held her head higher. She just did so well academically. The subjects she was struggling in, she improved. She struggled with math, and honestly I saw no amount, I shouldn’t say no amount… very little amount of struggling with having to do her math. I really believe that she struggled because of the peers around her. She struggled because maybe she thought she wasn’t as good, or couldn’t keep up with them, so she just shut down in class (Mrs. E, personal communication, August 23, 2011).

Values consistency as a form of social capital can be accomplished through homeschool cooperative groups, which are often faith-based, or developed by like-minded families. Schacter (2000) cautioned that perhaps one drawback from a tutorial
approach is that children can learn from each other, by discussing ideas, opinions, and beliefs, and by learning to resolve conflicts; therefore, homeschool cooperative groups can be a means to overcome what could be a drawback. Three families in this study said they have no contact with other homeschoolers. Twenty-one families reported that within their homeschool groups there were other families homeschooling children with SEN. Yet, seven families noted that they were not aware of any other children with SEN in their cooperative groups. Perhaps they are there, but the fact of having SEN is not made known. Mrs. GG stated that talking about having SEN is taboo in her homeschool community, so support in cooperative groups is minimal (personal communication, September 9, 2011). Only 8 of the 27 parents responding to that question felt satisfied with the level of support in their homeschool cooperative groups regarding homeschooling children with SEN. So while cooperative groups can be a good resource, these results suggest that group leaders would do well in examining how to increase the level of support for families within the group who are homeschooling children with SEN.

Increasing levels of social capital have shown improved academic competencies (Laser & Leibowitz, 2009). Two families in this study pointed out that they were pleased with the overall progress their child with SEN was showing. One father stated,

[We] don’t have the behavioral problems (chuckle), and number two he is up to where he should be, and he actually enjoys it more now. And I feel that he’s actually further ahead than when he was in the public school with general knowledge, that isn’t really a subject or anything. But just worldly, he just seems to know more (Mr. N., personal communication, July 29, 2011).

In addition to families citing progress as a reason to continue homeschooling, I
examined any statement in the interviews related to student progress. Parents made 32 positive comments related to the progress their children with SEN were making. Interestingly, 50% of those positive comments either mentioned the idea of progress being slow, or they referred to the need for adjusted pace. The ability to make those adjustments in pace is one of the benefits of low teacher to student ratio as mentioned in the teaching and learning section of Chapter 2 (Block, 1980). One mother noted, “I think it’s steady and it’s encouraging. He progresses at his own pace, and you know it’s at least satisfactory if not above so” (Mrs. BB, personal communication, August 31, 2011). Another mother explained, “I definitely see progress... very slow progress. I have found no short cuts, and you cannot brush over anything… we drill the same things every single day. And I know it was 7 months before they figured out telling time” (Mrs. D, personal communication, August 25, 2011).

Three families in this study started out just homeschooling their children with SEN, and then expanded to include all their school-aged children. One mother stated, “My original plan was to only homeschool him, and everyone else was going to go to school. And God changed my heart… This is a just a really good way to educate your kids, and I can do it” (Mrs. W, personal communication, August 24, 2011).

**Guiding question 2. What are the most common support services received from school districts?** Only one family was receiving services from their school district related to the children’s SEN. These results suggest that although the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) makes provisions for homeschooling families to request services from their school district for SEN, the majority of homeschooling families do not do so. I see three possible explanations for this. First, homeschoolers are known to be
autonomous, desiring independence (Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1999; Lerner, 1995), and thus tend to avoid their school districts rather than engage them in dialogue about possible services.

Second, some school districts set policies preventing homeschoolers from receiving optional services. Two families in this study approached their districts to explore possibilities of receiving services but were denied. The law allowed for the provision of these services, but stipulated that districts and families must be in agreement (Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law, 1988). Third, either the families or the districts may be unfamiliar with the law and not know how to respond to the possibility of working together to serve students with SEN. Much work remains to educate both district personnel and homeschooling families about the law and of the amicable possibilities in working together as suggested by Barrett (2003).

**Guiding question 3.** What are the most common support services received from independent resources? In this study, eight families stated that they are not currently receiving outside support services. Eight shared that they were receiving speech therapy. The next largest group, consisting of seven families, stated that they viewed their homeschool evaluator/consultant as a source of support. I found this to be interesting and had not expected to see this in the results. Although I serve in the role of evaluator/consultant to some families, several families in this study utilize the services of other evaluators. One mother who uses a different evaluator stated, “… the main help is our evaluator. Under the Pennsylvania state law, we have to have an evaluator. She has a few children who are also on the spectrum, and just a good resource to bounce things off of” (Mrs. W, personal communication, August 24, 2011). Another mother, who does
use my services as an evaluator, commented regarding sources of support,

My evaluator? Patti, you know, you with your degree in working with hard of hearing have been a resource for me. If I have any questions or any concerns, you’ve helped to guide me and also assured me that you’d be there if some problem arose where the school district wanted to maybe overstep their bounds. That you would be able to say that they were receiving a proper education with their hearing loss (Mrs. H, personal communication, July 26, 2011).

I noticed that in the two examples given, the homeschooling mother specifically mentioned the evaluator’s training or experience with working with children with SEN. The Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) does not require a family homeschooling children with SEN to utilize an evaluator certified in special education. They may use any certified teacher. Yet, the results of this study suggest that parents may want to consider carefully whom they choose to be their evaluator, weighing the aspect of that person being a possible source of support above and beyond the specific responsibilities of the evaluator outlined in the law.

Many other sources of support were listed. I noticed that these families were creative in finding resources to address their children’s SEN. Funding of the resources included both private and public insurance, families paying out of pocket, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), and medical flex plans, as well as services provided at no charge. Prior to this study, the one resource that I was unaware of was the service provided in-home by county Behavior Services, which includes a behavioral specialist and a therapeutic staff support person. These services were not affiliated with the school district, so autonomous families were more apt to seek their support. In order to be
eligible, the families had to have the Medical Access card, which is public insurance. That necessitated a formal diagnosis of the child’s SEN, an issue that will be addressed later in this discussion.

**Guiding question 4.** *Why do some homeschooling families choose to have in documentation to the district their children formally identified as needing special education services?* Arora (2006) recommended that parents need to know their rights and be familiar with the laws, as well as learn how to work in partnership with the local education agency. Lambert (2001) suggested that if the family lives in a school district friendly to homeschoolers, then they may be able to receive services at no cost. Older students may further benefit from being formally identified by being permitted to have testing accommodations when taking the SAT, or by being eligible through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for support services when preparing to take college classes. Only 6 of the 30 families in this study have their children identified as having SEN in their documentation to their school districts. All six of these families had children enrolled in traditional school at some point, so at least some of the children were previously identified as having SEN and the school district was already aware of that. Therefore, the families filed their documentation with their districts and included the fact that the child had been identified as having SEN. Only one of those families is receiving SEN services from the district.

**Guiding question 5.** *Why do some homeschooling families prefer to have in documentation to the district their children remain unidentified as needing special education services?* Among the 24 families in the study in this category, the main reason given for allowing the child to remain unidentified in district documentation was to avoid
interaction with the district. One mother was emphatic about not having any interaction
with the district. She did not identify her son’s SEN in her documentation, and when
asked if she would like to receive any support, she stated not from the district, “Nothing
at all from the school district. I don’t want anything to do with them” (Mrs. EE, personal
communication, August 31, 2011). Other families reported wanting to avoid having to
take the extra step of having their educational objectives pre-approved by a special
education teacher or psychologist. One mother, who did not identify her children’s SEN,
stated, “I chose not to do that, because I did not want to have to go and find somebody to
approve their curriculum” (Mrs. V, personal communication, July 29, 2011). Still others
said they never really gave it much thought.

I then looked at which of these families had a clear understanding of the law, a
semi-understanding of the law, or were unsure of the specifics of the law. I found it
interesting that even some families in my own consultation clientele were unsure of the
nuances of the law regarding homeschooling children with SEN. When asked what the
specifics of the law were for documentation, Mr. N, who did not identify his son’s SEN
in his documentation to the district, stated, “And what the laws are I couldn’t really tell
you” (personal communication, July 29, 2011). The school district was aware of his
son’s SEN, writing an IEP for him prior to his exit for homeschooling, yet they never
questioned his documentation. This caused me to wonder if even the districts have a
clear understanding of the homeschool law.

As I reflected further on the families’ awareness of the law, I found it interesting
that some of the newest homeschooling families were more familiar with the law than
some veteran homeschoolers. Parents’ understanding of the law affected how they filed
the required documentation with their local school districts. They arrived at this approach to filing based either on conscious choice or on lack of awareness of the law. I began to speculate that perhaps even when given accurate information verbally, parents do not process it all and retain it all, holding on to only what is pertinent during the conversation at hand. I then began to see the need for developing an informational brochure to give to families so they have something in print to refer to as they process and understand the legal requirements versus personal preferences (see Appendix J).

Two terms that were clarified as I worked with the data from this study are *diagnosed* and *identified*. Up until this point, these two terms seemed synonymous in my mind. However, after wrestling with the words and concepts and implications of each for this study, the differences between the terms, particularly for this study, became clearer. I began the study focusing on the question of why some parents homeschooling children with SEN in Pennsylvania identified in their documentation to their school districts their children’s SEN and why other parents did not. I then mentally divided the groups further, thinking that those families who identified their children in the documentation were eligible for support services from their districts if both parents and districts agreed, while those who did not identify their children in documentation had to differentiate instruction on their own.

During the course of this study, I noticed that many families had their children formally diagnosed by independent sources, and sought support services for those particular diagnoses through independent resources. Just because the children were diagnosed, however, did not mean that they were identified in the documentation to the district. Consequently, having their children remain unidentified in documentation to the
district did not mean the children remained without diagnoses. Of the families participating in this study, 23 had at least one child formally diagnosed, with only 7 families choosing to refrain from obtaining a diagnosis. Conversely, 20 families chose not to identify in documentation to their districts that their children have SEN. Only 6 families identified their child’s SEN in district documentation. While desiring to remain autonomous and independent from the school district, most parents who had their child formally diagnosed sought SEN services elsewhere.

In my work with homeschoolers with SEN, I have observed a certain tension in families over whether or not to have their child labeled. This conflict was addressed in the review of literature in Chapter 2. Dahm (1996) reported that many parents stated that they wanted their children to be able to live without the embarrassment of being labeled. Hannaford (2005) noted that the labeling process tends toward over simplification, lacking focus on the real person inside, often leading to lower self-esteem and lower potential for learning. Even with this in mind, Hensley (2009) recommended that parents consider not avoiding labels as they can have inherent value. Labels can help parents avoid denial. Labels also help parents grasp the child’s struggles, which in turn help parents locate information on how to address the child’s special needs and plan an appropriate program focusing on both strengths and weaknesses (Hensley, 2009). Parents can move past the labels and begin to view their child as a whole person who happens to have a learning disability, not as learning disabled person. One parent stated in the literature, “I don’t like labels, but I’ve learned not to fear them” (Field, 2005, p. 3). Professional diagnoses, and their corresponding labels, can explain years of struggles and doubts about parenting (Field, 2005).
I now better understand that *labeling, diagnosing, and identifying*, while similar, are different concepts with different legal, educational, and emotional implications. When parents suspect learning struggles in a child, they can seek professionals to assess and possibly diagnose the underlying problem. This diagnosis can in turn become a label, which for educational purposes helps parents determine how to address their child’s SEN. All of that can be done while still maintaining autonomy from the school district if the parents desire. They may choose to keep their discoveries to themselves, seeking private resources, and not identifying their child as having SEN in their documentation to their school districts. On the other hand, they may desire to seek support from their local school district, particularly if it has a reputation for being amicable toward homeschoolers. In such cases, parents may choose to identify their child’s SEN in their district documentation, knowing that in exchange for potential services, they will need to take an extra step and have their program pre-approved.

The nuances of these terms can be clarified to families through educational materials (see Appendix J) based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the findings of this study reported in Chapter 4 and discussed here.

**Potential Threats and Limitations of the Study**

Potential shortcomings of this study could lie in its narrow focus on homeschooling in the state of Pennsylvania alone. While the results may be interesting and helpful to homeschoolers and district personnel within Pennsylvania, they may not be equally important to others at this time.

**Potential Threats**

Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) cautioned researchers against
potential threats to the validity or credibility of a study. One method of data collection may be limited in its ability to assure truthfulness of the data. They suggest blending several methods to provide methods triangulation to assure that the data truly does accurately portray the participants’ perspectives. For example, during the interview part of this study, participants may have felt threatened or uncomfortable sharing particular information with the researcher, and they may have withheld information or perhaps even offered false information. However, participants were given the opportunity to contemplate the interview questions in advance by email and to share information on paper prior to being face to face with the researcher. Only one family in this study chose to write out answers in advance. Several other parents did preview the questions and jot some ideas, referring to their notes during the interviews.

Inaccurately portraying the meaning of the participants, or crisis of representation, is another potential threat to the internal validity of this study. To strengthen the internal validity and combat crisis of representation, I first transcribed the recordings from each interview. I then reviewed each transcript, listening again to the recording. Next, two other individuals reviewed each transcript while listening to the interview recordings. As each reviewer sent comments or corrections, I updated the transcripts and the other reviewer had access to the corrected version. Finally, a third reviewer conducted random spot checks of the transcripts compared to the recordings.

Furthermore, asking some of the participants to review the field notes, interview transcripts, and data results as they emerge can help avoid this potential threat (Ary et al., 2006). Qualitative research practices encourage member checks. To do these checks, the researcher checks with the participants to see if the interview transcripts accurately
captured their input (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). I sent emails to all participants with their transcripts as a file attachment. I wanted them to be able to check for accuracy and to be assured of confidentiality by seeing how their identifying information was removed. I asked the participants to contact me if they had any questions or comments about the transcripts. One participant did not have email, so I called him to ask if he would like to review the transcript, and at his request I mailed the transcript to him. One family made one editorial suggestion for clarity, and nine families responded that all appeared to be in order. I received no questions or comments from the other 20 families.

Another potential threat to the internal validity of this study relates to how the results are aligned with established theory. I was careful to tie in theory reviewed in Chapter 2 with the discussion of the results of this study. I included in the review of literature sections about educational theory and about teaching and learning. As I conducted the interviews and began the data analysis, I frequently reflected on the theory and conceptual framework presented in the literature review and drew from that to develop my categories and codes for the data analysis and interpretation steps of this study.

A final potential threat to this study’s internal validity is that of possible bias. This study has negative case sampling built into it, because it involved both families that chose to identify their children as having SEN to the local school district and families who chose to have their children remain unidentified as needing special education services in their district documentation. Also, the participants in this study were equally divided with 15 families who have only ever homeschooled and 15 families who have
sent at least one child to traditional school. The participants in this study were also evenly divided between the two categories for beginning to homeschool: negative exit and positive entry. Furthermore, the families had a wide variety of experience, ranging from being in their first week of homeschooling to having homeschooled for 17 years. These negative case sampling characteristics of the study help to reduce possible bias and strengthen the study’s internal validity.

Limitations

The results of this study may not be widely generalizable due to its specific focus on homeschooling in Pennsylvania. The study is also specific to homeschooling children with SEN, not all homeschoolers in general. Yet, the principles and resources (see Appendix K) that have emerged from this study may be helpful to families homeschooling in other states, particularly those parents homeschooling children with SEN. This information may also be helpful to school districts in other states (Dahm, 1996; Barrett, 2003, Mayberry et al., 1999).

Ethical Issues

This study offered minimal threats to its human participants. All interviews were with consenting adults. Because some interviews were conducted in the families’ homes, occasional contact with minors occurred, but always in the presence of the parents. I was careful to omit from the transcripts incidental interaction with children during the interviews. Confidentiality and the lack of identifying information also helped to minimize risk to human participants. All references to names and identifying locations were omitted from the interview transcripts, and were replaced with an identification code to ensure confidentiality. The signed informed consent forms as well as electronic
files of the interview recordings and the transcripts are being stored for a minimum of three years in a locked cabinet in my office at the university where I teach, according to the requirements of Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board.

Because the issues being explored in this study are often associated with strong feelings and opinions, it could pose potential conflict with my own personal feelings and opinions. The most intense issue was that of joining with the school district or of remaining independent from the school district. I have been clear to point out that I have homeschooled my children who fit into both of these categories. Thus personal experience has helped to reduce the bias in this case. Also, my professional experience has been helpful in balancing my perspective and reducing potential bias. I have worked with numerous families who work with the district resources and with families who remain independent from the district.

Furthermore, my professional reputation within the homeschool community served as a point of strength in this study. As indicated in Chapter 2, conducting research among homeschooling families can present certain difficulties. The homeschooling population is geographically diverse, and researchers have found a lack of adequate sampling frames (Collom, 2005; Lines, 2000; Mayberry et al., 1999; Ray, B., 2000; Stevens, 2001). These researchers also discovered a certain reticence among homeschoolers to participate in studies by unknown researchers (Collom, 2005). I am well-known and respected among homeschoolers in Pennsylvania. For this study, I attempted to find participants who were not among my consultation clientele. Rather than encountering reticence, I had families initiating contact and volunteering to participate in this study. They even thanked me for doing this research. At least 10 of
the 30 participating families (33%) were either not among my clientele or were new to my clientele (less than a year). Families participating in this study were utilizing the services of seven different evaluators/consultants.

Summary

Although homeschooling is legal in all 50 states in the United States of America, each state has its own law governing the practices of homeschooling. This study examined the specifics of the Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law (1988) and how families interpret it and apply it. This study focused only on families in Pennsylvania homeschooling children with special education needs (SEN).

Patterns within responses to the interview questions revealed some lack of clarity with certain terms, namely identified and diagnosed, along with the term label. The 1988 Pennsylvania Homeschooling Law specifically addresses children who have been identified as having special needs pursuant to another aspect of school law. When compared with documentation requirements for children without SEN, parents homeschooling children with SEN are required to take an extra step in their documentation to their school districts. Some homeschooling parents have heard about that contingency in the law and have then avoided having their child tested or diagnosed, fearing extra scrutiny from their school districts. Other parents have avoided having their child labeled, due to concern for embarrassment or low self-esteem associated with a label.

This study found that seeking private resources for assessing and diagnosing their child helps parents in several ways. First, the resources are separate from the district, and information is not shared with the district unless parents sign release forms. Therefore, a
diagnosis serves to help parents know how to better serve their children. Yet, without information going to the school districts, the child remains unidentified for the purposes of documentation, thus saving the extra step of having the program pre-approved, as well as reducing the feeling of scrutiny. With a diagnosis, which serves as a label of sorts without the negative social implications, parents may have access to other resources like public insurance and services funded by that insurance. A formal diagnosis may also provide opportunities for support when older children make the transition to jobs or college. One resource for such support, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, requires a formal diagnosis. With that diagnosis parents can have a better understanding of what their child’s needs are, which in turn helps them to plan how to best address those needs.

So a diagnosis by a private source is not synonymous with identification by the school district, giving parents the choice of whether they want to identify their child’s SEN in their documentation to the district. Parents can weigh their options requesting SEN services from their school district. If they are interested in doing so, they can then take the extra steps in documentation as required by the law. If they prefer to deal solely with private resources, then they have the option to maintain autonomy in their documentation. This study found that at least within the 30 participating families, while the Pennsylvania law allows for families to receive SEN services from their districts of residence, it is actually happening on a minimal level.

Homeschool cooperative groups are another potential resource. While a few families homeschooling children with SEN are pleased with their experiences in co-ops, many families expressed frustration or even disappointment with their experiences.
Leaders of co-ops should take these findings into consideration. They might be missing unique opportunities to support homeschooled children with SEN and also their parents.

Homeschool evaluators/consultants are still another resource and are actually required by the law in Pennsylvania. These evaluators can play a key role in educating families about the specifics of the law as well as sharing resources related to homeschooling children with SEN. Families select the person to do their evaluations. Based on the results of this study, parents may benefit from choosing an evaluator who either has children of her own with SEN or who has experience or training in working with students with SEN. Homeschool evaluators would do well to provide information about the law in print form, because families miss or forget information given verbally only. Evaluators should keep themselves informed about the nuances of the law.

Finally, patterns emerging in this study have indicated the importance of families homeschooling children with SEN to: (a) know the law; (b) know their own philosophy of interacting with their school districts; (c) know their child’s special needs; and (d) know resources available to them both in services and in curricular materials. Families should also be aware that while it is typical for children with SEN to make progress in their programs, the progress may be much slower than they anticipate. One mother in this study stated,

I have seen steady progress with her… one of the things about homeschooling is they have time to be late bloomers as long as mom isn’t freaking out, from my idea of where they should be. And I am learning to relax (Mrs. Y, personal communication, August 8, 2011.)

This awareness allows parents to nurture the children’s strengths and strengthen their
weaknesses (Martinez, 2009).

**Recommendations for Research**

This study attempted to explore the phenomenon of homeschooling children with special education needs (SEN). Although the population was a segment of the larger population of families within Pennsylvania homeschooling children with SEN, there was still diversity in the following areas: geographically within the state, length of time homeschooling, types of special needs being addressed, philosophy of handling the documentation submitted to school districts, and reasons for beginning to homeschool. Consequently, the unique situation of each family and each type of special need must be considered when making generalizations about the findings of this study.

Further research could be conducted on a larger population to see if the patterns found in this study can be generalized to other families within the state. Research could also examine each separate type of special need and how families are addressing them. Longitudinal follow-up to determine effectiveness and even outcomes for the students upon graduation would be an excellent focus of research. A study could be done investigating each school district within the state and their policies and practices in light of the specifics of the state’s law in dealing with families residing within their jurisdiction homeschooling children with SEN. Conversely, further research could be conducted among families residing in each school district, comparing their interactions with their district regarding homeschooling children with SEN and watching for emerging patterns within districts of residence. One more area that could be studied is the role of the homeschool evaluator/consultant, and families’ perceptions of what is helpful, particularly when homeschooling children with SEN. Finally, quantitative research could
be conducted based on educating both homeschooling families and school district personnel about the nuances of the law and comparing levels of awareness and interaction before and after focused information is delivered.

**Implications for Practical Application**

While the limitations suggest that the information in this study might not be applied outside the narrow population of parents homeschooling children with SEN in the state of Pennsylvania, the focus of this study does carry importance. As stated at the beginning of the study, the population of those homeschooling children with SEN is burgeoning. Stevens (2003) suggested that if the general homeschool movement has transitioned from once being counter-culture to being a generally accepted educational choice, then perhaps special needs homeschooling will follow the same trajectory. I receive calls almost weekly, and sometimes several a week, from families considering homeschooling, and in particular homeschooling a child with SEN. Other calls come from families already homeschooing but who have just had a child diagnosed with SEN.

One mother whose child was diagnosed after they had been homeschooling a few years stated,

> I know that there are times I wanted to quit, but I know I shouldn’t. And, I think you came along at just the time, just to hear the encouragement from your perspective, and knowing that you have a daughter who is hard of hearing. Just knowing that helped… So I think that God has put you in our lives for a purpose at this time (Mrs. P, personal communication, August 29, 2011).

Another mother who was new to homeschooling and new to Pennsylvania shared,
I just feel like you were a blessing, because it was like a random list I found on the internet that had contact information for you and I was very frustrated and it was late at night, and I had done a lot of crying, and a lot of, you know, “Who am I going to find?” And people I had found don’t live in our area, or don’t know our school district, or don’t know for this area what needs to be done, or weren’t really within traveling distance that would make it easy to contact them. So I just feel like we’ve been really blessed, to have you not only be someone that can help us with education, but knows special needs (Mrs. R, personal communication, August 22, 2011).

Parental involvement in education is encouraged in traditional school programs. Homeschooling is the ultimate parental involvement. Yet, as seen in this study, some homeschooling families desire support resources or even services. With this in mind, this study could be useful for certified teachers considering serving in the role of homeschool evaluator/consultant. It stresses the importance of knowing the nuances of the homeschool law and being familiar with issues related to homeschooling students with SEN. One cannot easily apply traditional classroom practices to the uniqueness of the homeschool environment, yet one can certainly employ sound educational theory to maximize the impact of this opportunity for individualization in an educational program.

This study could also help school districts better understand the needs of the families residing within their jurisdiction. Perhaps they could review their policies and practices and strive to work together with those families desiring an amicable relationship, while respecting the autonomy afforded by the law for those families wishing to remain independent yet accountable within the parameters of the law. They
could apply Barrett’s 2003 recommendations to the nuances of the Pennsylvania law and embrace homeschoolers.

This study could also be helpful for homeschooling families, as it gives them a bigger picture of what other families are experiencing, a better grasp of the law, and insight into resources utilized by the families participating in this study. Finally, this study could be helpful for professional special education teachers, as it provides insight into practices and materials utilized by these families trying to provide an ultimate individualized program for their children with SEN (Bannier, 2007).

During the time I was reviewing the literature and developing the proposal for this study, I received a phone call from a mother within my established clientele who had a child newly diagnosed with SEN. For every question the mother asked about how to adapt her homeschooling, I had a solid answer, drawn from my readings while conducting the review of literature for this study. The homeschooling mother was amazed at God's love for her son. He allowed her evaluator to be doing this research to be equipped to answer her questions in her time of need. The material in this study is already touching lives.
REFERENCES


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doi:10.1080/0161956x.2000.9681945


Homeschoolers, 93.


APPENDIX A

HOMESCHOOL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Appendix A

Homeschool Interview Questions

1. Talk about why you originally chose to home school.

2. Why are you continuing to home school?

3. Has your child been diagnosed as having a disability? What is it and how was it diagnosed?

4. What special requirements does your state’s homeschool law have for homeschooling a child with special needs? How have you handled this?

5. What help are you presently receiving to address your child’s special needs? (tutor, support group, services from a school, independent therapist, etc.)

6. How are these services funded?

7. If your child received services through a formal school system, describe those services (setting, teachers or other professionals, classroom accommodations, therapies).

8. What services would you like to receive that you are not receiving now?

9. What type of curriculum do you use in your home schooling?

10. How would you describe your child’s educational progress?

11. What type of contact do you have with other homeschooling families? Do any have children with special needs?

12. What is the most satisfying aspect of home schooling your special needs child?

13. What is the most frustrating part of home schooling your special needs child?

14. What advice would you give other parents homeschooling struggling learners?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add?
APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO USE DUFFEY’S INSTRUMENT
Appendix B

Permission to Use Duffey’s Instrument

Email received: May 5, 2008

Hi Patti,

You are welcome to use my survey. It was indeed an interesting bit of research. I would appreciate it if you would keep me informed of what you find in your search. I think that the online community is better organized now than it was 9-10 years ago when I conducted my research so you should be able to gather some rich data.

By the way, my home email address is jgduffey@cox.net

Blessings – Jane

Jane Duffey
Academic Dean
Norfolk Christian Schools
757-423-5770

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From: Patti Stoudt [mailto:pstoudt@ptd.net]
Sent: Monday, May 05, 2008 12:29 AM
To: hsad@norfolkchristian.info
Subject: Question for Dr. Duffey from Liberty University Student

Hello Dr. Duffey,

I am a doctoral student at Liberty University and am interested in researching the accommodations homeschooling parents make with their students who have special educational needs. I have read several of your articles and also your dissertation. Your work has been an inspiration! One of the suggestions my professor for Qualitative Research has given is to use a survey already established. So I am writing to ask your permission to use the survey you used in your dissertation. Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you have.

In Christ,

Mrs. Patti Stoudt, M.S.
570-594-1352
pstoudt@ptd.net or pkstoudt@liberty.edu
260 Riverview Drive
Bloomsburg, PA 17815
APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Appendix C

Institutional Review Board Approval

From: IRB, IRB
Sent: Friday, May 06, 2011 2:44 PM
To: Stoudt, Patricia Koelsch
Cc: Shoemaker, Judy; IRB, IRB; Garzon, Fernando
Subject: IRB Approval 1070.050611: Accommodations in Homeschool Settings for Children with Special Education Needs

Good Afternoon Patricia,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. Attached you'll find the forms for those cases.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project. We will be glad to send you a written memo from the Liberty IRB, as needed, upon request.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
IRB Chair, Associate Professor
Center for Counseling & Family Studies

(434) 592-5054

40 Years of Training Champions for Christ: 1971-2011
APPLICATION TO USE HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Liberty University

Committee On The Use of Human Research Subjects

1. Project Title: Accommodations in Homeschool Settings for Children with Special Education Needs

2. Full Review ☐ Expedited Review ☒

3. Funding Source (State N/A if not applicable): NA

4. Principal Investigator:
   Mrs. Patricia Stoudt, Graduate Student
   Name and Title
   Correspondence address
   570-594-1352, pkstoudt@liberty.edu, 260 Riverview Drive, Bloomsburg, PA 17815
   Phone, E-mail,

5. Faculty Sponsor (if student is PI), also list co-investigators below Faculty Sponsor, and key personnel:
   Dr. Judy Shoemaker
   jshoemaker@liberty.edu
   Name and Title
   Dept., Phone, E-mail
   SOE, 863-604-0111,

6. Non-key personnel:
   Dr. Dorinda Grasty
dgrasty2@liberty.edu.
   Dr. Terry Fasel
terry.fasel@warner.edu
   Name and Title
   Liberty
   Warner
   University,
   Dept., Phone, E-mail

7. Consultants:
   Dr. Judy Shoemaker
   jshoemaker@liberty.edu
   Name and Title
   Dept., Phone, E-mail
   SOE, 863-604-0111,
8. The principal investigator agrees to carry out the proposed project as stated in the application and to promptly report to the Human Subjects Committee any proposed changes and/or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others participating in approved project in accordance with the Liberty Way and the Confidentiality Statement. The principal investigator has access to copies of 45 CFR 46 and the Belmont Report. The principal investigator agrees to inform the Human Subjects Committee and complete all necessary reports should the principal investigator terminate University association. Additionally s/he agrees to maintain records and keep informed consent documents for three years after completion of the project even if the principal investigator terminates association with the University.

Principal Investigator Signature
February 28, 2011
Date

Faculty Sponsor (If applicable)
Date

Submit the original request to: Human Subjects Office, Liberty University, 1971 University Blvd., IRB Chair, Suite 2400 CN, Lynchburg, VA 24502

APPLICATION TO USE HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS

10. This project will be conducted at the following location(s): (please indicate city & state)
- Liberty University Campus
- Other (Specify): 260 Riverview Dr., Bloomsburg, PA 17815

11. This project will involve the following subject types: (check-mark types to be studied)
- Normal Volunteers (Age 18-65)
- Subjects Incapable Of Giving Consent
- In Patients
- Prisoners Or Institutionalized Individuals
- Out Patients
- Minors (Under Age 18)
- Patient Controls
- Over Age 65
- Fetuses
- University Students (PSYC Dept. subject pool ___)
- Other Potentially Elevated Risk
- Cognitively Disabled
- Physically Disabled
Pregnant Women

12. Estimated number of subjects to be enrolled in this protocol: __30___________

13. Does this project call for: (check-mark all that apply to this study)
   - Use of Voice, Video, Digital, or Image Recordings?
   - Subject Compensation? Patients $_____ Volunteers $_____
   - Participant Payment Disclosure Form
   - Advertising For Subjects? ___________ More
   - More Than Minimal Risk?
   - More Than Minimal Psychological Stress?
   - Alcohol Consumption?
   - Confidential Material (questionnaires, photos, etc.)?
   - Waiver of Informed Consent?
   - Extra Costs To The Subjects (tests, hospitalization, etc.)?
   - VO2 Max Exercise?
   - The Exclusion of Pregnant Women?
   - The Use of Blood? Total Amount of Blood _____
   - Over Time Period (days) ______
   - The Use of rDNA or Biohazardous materials?
   - The Use of Human Tissue or Cell Lines?
   - The Use of Other Fluids that Could Mask the Presence of Blood (Including Urine and Feces)?
   - The Use of Protected Health Information (Obtained from Healthcare Practitioners or Institutions)?

14. This project involves the use of an **Investigational New Drug** (IND) or an **Approved Drug For An Unapproved Use**.
   - YES  ☒  NO
   - Drug name, IND number and company: ________________________________

15. This project involves the use of an **Investigational Medical Device** or an **Approved Medical Device For An Unapproved Use**.
   - YES  ☒  NO
   - Device name, IDE number and company: ________________________________

16. The project involves the use of **Radiation or Radioisotopes**:
   - YES  ☒  NO

17. Does investigator or key personnel have a potential conflict of interest in this study?
   - YES  ☒  NO

**EXPEDITED/FULL REVIEW APPLICATION NARRATIVE**
A. **PROPOSED RESEARCH RATIONALE** (Why are you doing this study? [Excluding degree requirement])

I serve as a consultant for homeschooling families in PA. There is a growing number of families homeschooling children with special education needs. The specifics of the PA law present potential conflicts for families homeschooling children with special needs. I would like to gather qualitative data and look for emerging patterns of how these families arrive at their decisions for providing accommodations for their children’s special needs. This information can be helpful for other families facing similar decisions, and may be helpful for school districts exploring how to accommodate the needs of these families in their jurisdiction.

B. **SPECIFIC PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED**

- In a step-by-step manner, using simple, non-scientific language describe what your subjects will be required to do. (Note: Sections C and D deal with type of subjects and their recruitment. That information does not need to be included here.)
- The researcher will obtain from the subjects informed consent using the form from Liberty University.
- The researcher will send an email to the subjects containing the interview questions.
- The subjects will have time to think about their responses, and will be asked to jot down their thoughts, and email them back to the researcher prior to their interviews.
- The researcher will interview the subjects and audio-record the interviews.
- The researcher will transcribe the interview tapes and analyze the data for emerging patterns, coding by category.
- The researcher will utilize the help of two others to read the transcripts and check data analysis for reliability and to prevent researcher bias, one a Liberty on-line student in business who has an analytical mind, and the other a colleague who has an earned Ph.D. and has experience analyzing qualitative data.
- The researcher will email to the subjects the researcher’s transcription and summaries of their interviews for the subjects to have the opportunity to review and email any questions or comments back to the researcher.

C. **SUBJECTS**

Who do you want to include in your study? Please describe in non-scientific language:

- The inclusion criteria for the subject populations including gender, age ranges, ethnic background, health status and any other applicable information. Provide a rationale for targeting those populations.
- Subjects in this study will be parents homeschooling children with special needs in PA. There are no criteria regarding age, gender, ethnic background, socio-economic status, or any other variable.
- The exclusion criteria for subjects.
- Subjects will be excluded if they have never homeschooled a child with special needs in PA.
- For this study, cyber-schooling is not considered homeschooling under the PA law, so subjects will be excluded if they have only cyber-schooled and never homeschooled under Act 169 of 1988.
- Explain the rationale for the involvement of any special populations (Examples: children, specific focus on ethnic populations, mentally retarded, lower socio-economic status, prisoners)
- Subjects involved will be consenting adults, parents of children with special needs.
- The children themselves will not be involved in the study.
- Provide the maximum number of subjects you seek approval to enroll from all of the subject populations you intend to use and justify the sample size. You will not be approved to enroll a number greater than this. If at a later time it becomes apparent you need to increase your sample size, you will need to submit a Revision Request.
- 30
- **For NIH, federal, or state funded protocols only:** If you do not include women, minorities and children in your subject pool, you must include a justification for their exclusion. The justification must meet the exclusionary criteria established by the NIH.

D. RECRUITMENT OF SUBJECTS AND OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT
- Describe your recruitment process in a straightforward, step-by-step manner. The IRB needs to know all the steps you will take to recruit subjects in order to ensure subjects are properly informed and are participating in a voluntary manner. An incomplete description will cause a delay in the approval of your protocol application.
- I will contact by phone or email families within my current homeschooling consultation clientele whom I know to be homeschooling children with special needs (see attached).
- I will ask if they are interested or willing to participate in my study, describing the interview process and assuring them of confidentiality, as well as describing to them the informed consent process.
- I will then send them in regular mail the informed consent form from Liberty University, with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope.
- When I receive the completed informed consent, I will schedule an interview time.

E. PROCEDURES FOR PAYMENT OF SUBJECTS
- Describe any compensation that subjects will receive. Please note that Liberty University Business Office policies might affect how you can compensate subjects. Please contact your department’s business office to ensure your compensation procedures are allowable by these policies.
- Subject participation will be voluntary with no compensation.

F. CONFIDENTIALITY
- Describe what steps you will take to maintain the confidentiality of subjects.
- Subjects will be assigned a reference code for ID, and all identifying information on correspondence will be removed or covered with white-out. Consent forms will be sent and returned via the United States Postal Service.
• A master list of subject names and reference codes will be be stored on a memory stick and locked in a cabinet in my office at Bloomsburg University.

• Describe how research records, data, specimens, etc. will be stored and for how long.

• Consent forms, audio-recordings, research records, and data will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office at Bloomsburg University for 3 years.

• Describe if the research records, data, specimens, etc. will be destroyed at a certain time. Additionally, address if they may be used for future research purposes.

• After 3 years, I will destroy the voice recordings and any other records with identifying information. The transcriptions will be included in the dissertation with no identifying information. Future research may build upon this study, using only information included in the dissertation, but the voice recordings will not be available, having been destroyed.

G. POTENTIAL RISKS TO SUBJECTS

• There are always risks associated with research. If the research is minimal risk, which is no greater than every day activities, then please describe this fact.

• This research project presents minimal risk to subjects, no greater than every day activities. The subjects are required as part of their homeschooling to annually see an evaluator of their choice with qualification specified in the law, to be interviewed by that evaluator. I already serve as the evaluator of the families’ choice, and interview them yearly. This interview will be similar to that regular activity.

• Describe the risks to participants and steps that will be taken to minimize those risks. Risks can be physical, psychological, economic, social, legal, etc.

• One possible psychological risk may be that the parents may feel vulnerable to negative ramifications from their school district of residence. I will assure them of confidentiality, and point out to them that in our annual interview, they are the ones to submit materials to the school district. I do not submit anything directly to the district, either annually or in this study. I will also remind them of the confidentiality assured them at the beginning of the process.

• Families may fear a legal risk since we will be discussing how they choose to comply with the homeschool law. Again I will reassure them that I do not contact the school district under regular circumstances and neither will I in matters related to this study. The study does not involve any dangerous or legally shady discussion topics. It only explores how they are choosing to make accommodations for their child’s special needs within the parameters of Act 169 of 1988.
Where appropriate, describe alternative procedures or treatments that might be advantageous to the participants.
- N/A

Describe provisions for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of adverse effects to participants or additional resources for participants.
- The study is designed with minimal risk to the subjects. If however, subject anxiety creates adverse effects, my husband is a registered nurse and will be nearby, since he only works on weekends. If necessary I am also willing to call 911. Subjects will also be encouraged to contact the researcher, who will provide detailed contact information, if anxiety or questions arise any time after the interviews.

H. BENEFITS TO BE GAINED BY THE INDIVIDUAL AND/OR SOCIETY
- Describe the possible direct benefits to the subjects. If there are no direct benefits, please state this fact.
  - The subjects in this study are part of my current homeschool consultation clientele. They will be the direct recipients of any knowledge I gain from the research process both in conducting my review of literature and data collection.
- Describe the possible benefits to society. In other words, how will doing this project be a positive contribution and for whom?
  - In my review of literature, I found that other researchers suggested that not only do the homeschooling families benefit from the results of research, but so do the local school districts who are open to exploring ways to interact with homeschoolers, so do program developers looking to increase clientele in how to serve families with children with special needs, so do educators who can benefit from the successes of the individualized approaches used by homeschoolers, so do lawmakers who are developing policy for education.

I. INVESTIGATOR’S EVALUATION OF THE RISK-BENEFIT RATIO

Here you explain why you believe the study is still worth doing even with any identified risks.
- Since the risk to subjects is minimal, no greater than every day activities, and the data gathered and information gleaned may be helpful to families homeschooling children with special needs under the specifics of the PA law, the benefits far outweigh the risks.

J. WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Please attach to the Application Narrative. See Informed Consent IRB materials for assistance in developing an
appropriate form. See K below if considering waiving signed consent or informed consent)

- Attached

K. WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT OR SIGNED CONSENT

Waiver of consent is sometimes used in research involving a deception element. Waiver of signed consent is sometimes used in anonymous surveys or research involving secondary data. See Waiver of Informed Consent information on the IRB website. If requesting either a waiver of consent or a waiver of signed consent, please address the following:

- N/A

1. For a Waiver of Signed Consent, address the following:
   a. Does the research pose greater than minimal risk to subjects (greater than everyday activities)?
   b. Does a breach of confidentiality constitute the principal risk to subjects?
   c. Would the signed consent form be the only record linking the subject and the research?
   d. Does the research include any activities that would require signed consent in a non-research context?
   e. Will you provide the subjects with a written statement about the research (an information sheet that contains all the elements of the consent form but without the signature lines)?

2. For a Waiver of Consent Request, address the following:
   - N/A
     a. Does the research pose greater than minimal risk to subjects (greater than everyday activities)?
     b. Will the waiver adversely affect subjects’ rights and welfare? Please justify?
     c. Why would the research be impracticable without the waiver?
     d. How will subject debriefing occur (i.e., how will pertinent information about the real purposes of the study be reported to subjects, if appropriate, at a later date?)

L. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (to be attached to the Application Narrative)

- Dissertation proposal

M. COPIES:

For investigators requesting Expedited Review or Full Review, email the application along with all supporting materials to the IRB Chair (Dr. Fernando Garzon, fgarzon@liberty.edu). Submit one hard copy with all supporting documents as well to Dr. Fernando Garzon, Liberty University, IRB Review, 1971 University Blvd., Lynchburg, VA 24502.
APPENDIX D

EMAIL/PHONE SCRIPT OF INVITATION FOR PARTICIPATION
Email/Phone Script of Invitation for Participation

Dear __________:

I am completing my doctoral studies and am doing a research study of homeschooling children with special education needs. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a parent who is or has homeschooled a child with special education needs.

The purpose of this study is: to explore the ways homeschooling parents have found to meet the special education needs of their children who are struggling learners.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your decision of whether or not to participate will not affect our relationship with homeschool evaluations and consultation.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant.

Please let me know by ___________ (date) if you are interested in participating in this study, and I will mail an informed consent form with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

I will then contact you to set a 1-hour appointment to interview you about your experiences. Prior to our appointment, I will email to you the list of questions I will use in our interview. You will have time to preview the questions and jot down your thoughts in preparation for the interview. I will ask you to email those notes back to me prior to the interview, and they will assist me in notetaking. I will tape the interview session and will then create a transcript of the interview.

I will email that transcript to you so you can review it for accuracy. All transcripts will be kept locked securely in my office, insuring confidentiality for all families participating in this study.

Thank you,
Mrs. Patti Stoudt
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
pstoudt@ptd.net
570-594-1352
APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form
Accommodations in Homeschool Settings for Children with Special Education Needs
Doctoral Research
Patricia Koelsch Stoudt
Liberty University
Education

You are invited to be in a research study of homeschooling children with special education needs. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a parent who is or has homeschooled a child with special education needs. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Patricia Koelsch Stoudt (Patti), a Doctoral Student at Liberty University.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is: to explore the ways homeschooling parents have found to meet the special education needs of their children who are struggling learners.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Patti Stoudt will send (either by email or regular mail) you a copy of the interview questions, asking you to contemplate them and write your thoughts and send a copy of your responses back to Patti Stoudt prior to the interview day.
- Patti Stoudt will interview you in her home, or your home, or another location of your choosing.
- The interview will be taped to help Patti Stoudt accurately convey the information you give her.
- Each interview will last 1 hour.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study has several risks: The risks are minimal, no more than you would encounter in everyday life. One possible psychological risk may be that the parents may feel vulnerable to negative ramifications from their school district of residence. The researcher assures confidentiality and will not be submitting anything directly to school districts.

The researcher will utilize the help of two others to read the transcripts of the interviews and check data analysis for reliability and to prevent researcher bias, one a
Liberty on-line student in business who has an analytical mind, and the other a colleague who has an earned Ph.D. and has experience analyzing qualitative data.

The benefits to participation are: Knowing you will be contributing to the homeschool community.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Tapes of the interview will be stored in a locked metal cabinet during the course of the study. When the tapes are transcribed, they will be erased.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Patricia Koelsch Stoudt. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at 260 Riverview Drive, Bloomsburg, PA 17815, 570-594-1352, pstoudt@ptd.net. The student’s advisor’s name, telephone and e-mail address are as follows: Dr. Judy Shoemaker, 863-604-0111, jshoemaker@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 2400, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_______________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature of Investigator:___________________________ Date: __________________
APPENDIX F

EMAIL TO PARENTS TO PREVIEW INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Appendix F

Email to Parents to Preview Interview Questions

Dear _____,

Thank you for returning your Informed Consent form for participating in my research study.

Below, please find the questions I will be asking during our interview. Please take some time to read the questions and jot your thoughts down to help facilitate the interview process.

Please send these questions with your thoughts added in an email to me prior to our interview appointment. Be sure to keep a copy for your records and feel free to refer to your notes during our interview.

Also, please remember that participation in this study is voluntary, and that you may discontinue at any time. Our relationship regarding homeschool evaluations and consultation will in no way be affected by your decision of whether or not to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Patti Stoudt
pstoudt@ptd.net
570-594-1352

Interview Questions

1. Talk about why you originally chose to home school.
2. Why are you continuing to home school?
3. Has your child been diagnosed as having a disability? What is it and how was it diagnosed?
4. What special requirements does your state’s homeschool law have for homeschooling a child with special needs? How have you handled this?
5. What help are you presently receiving to address your child’s special needs? (tutor, support group, services from a school, independent therapist, etc.)
6. How are these services funded?
7. If your child received services through a formal school system, describe those services (setting, teachers or other professionals, classroom accommodations, therapies).
8. What services would you like to receive that you are not receiving now?
9. What type of curriculum do you use in your home schooling?
10. How would you describe your child’s educational progress?
11. What type of contact do you have with other homeschooling families? Do any have children with special needs?
12. What is the most satisfying aspect of home schooling your special needs child?
13. What is the most frustrating part of home schooling your special needs child?
14. What advice would you give other parents homeschooling struggling learners?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share?
APPENDIX G

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
Appendix G

Sample Interview Transcript

This transcript is a sample of all transcribed from the 30 interviews. To include all 30 transcripts would add over 400 additional pages to this dissertation, so I chose to include one as a sample. All other transcripts will be stored in digital form locked securely in my office for three years according to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board’s policy.

‘I’ indicates when the Interviewer was speaking.

Family C (File 3/5) 8/29/2011 41:12 Reviewed by PS, AT, BE

The interviewer met with Mrs. C at a restaurant of Mrs. C’s choosing. Interactions with the wait staff are omitted from the transcript.

I – Turn this on, and put this over here where it’s out of your way, if you need your notes or anything. And I gave you a copy of the consent form. It has contact information in case you’re ever concerned about anything with how I’m conducting this study. It’s for your safety.

C – OK

I – And I always start out by saying thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. So you’re allowed to talk around your ice cream. I won’t be upset.

C – OK OK

I - Enjoy your ice cream, you need it. It’s your therapy. And maybe we could start off by just talking a little bit about some of your original reasons to choose to homeschool.

C – Probably number 1 would have to be that when we had C__ tested at school because I didn’t see him progressing as well or in the same manner as our four older children did.
And they proceeded to do some tests at school and told me that in a round-about way told me he was dyslexic at that point and said that he would never get more than maybe half of the information, but he would get through. Somehow at that point, in 1st grade it wasn’t satisfactory enough to know that they only expected him to get half of the information, and that was going to be acceptable. So at that point we looked into homeschooling and by the following year, we got into homeschooling.

I – So for 2nd grade you did?

C – Mmhmm.

I – So he went to public school for Kindergarten and then 1st grade?

C – Right. And we even repeated Kindergarten, because the first year of Kindergarten… His birthday’s in May. He would have been 5. He started school in September. So maybe for a boy, and the baby of the family, he could have been considered a young 5-year-old. So I thought maybe that was right when the progression seemed to stop about mid-way through the year when the reading and writing started really coming into play in Kindergarten. I thought, OK well we need to repeat the year, because he might pick up. They would have passed him at that point, because they said he’s done everything to pass. And only having experienced what I had with the other four kids, I thought, he’s not where he needed to be. So I wanted to do Kindergarten again. So we did Kindergarten again, and we switched teachers. So for him it just seemed like he was doing the next year of school then…

I – Sure, a little different.

C - Actually repeating the same. So we did that. And the same stumbling block hit with the reading and writing again. But at this point, it’s like OK move on and maybe he’ll
pick it up. In 1st grade he just had more and more struggles. It was the work he did in school, we were re-doing at home. I looked at it as your worst day at work, was his worst day at school, everyday! He would come... and the teachers would have no complaints. They said he sits in class. He doesn’t act out. He’s fine. I said, “Deal with him when he comes home.” I mean we were in break down, temper tantrums. We were upset about everything. We can’t do it. We were just... I mean it was like coming home and exploding from the worst day at work. Every day... So after a year of that, and it didn’t get any better. I thought there has to be a better way to do this. Then, I probably had told you at that point, my original goal was to get him to middle school, and hope that he could re-enter school at that point.

I – Mmm

C – But by the time we started 5th grade, he was still not where he could have been at a reading level at that point. And I could tell, he learned from moving around, instead of sitting still.

I – So you were picking up on his learning styles?

C – So instead of sitting at the table and having to write all the time, I might sit at the table, because that’s where I was most comfortable. But he could hear the flock of geese fly over, and run to the door, look at the geese. “Did you see those geese?” And I couldn’t hear them yet, but he could. Come back and I’d say, “Did you hear anything I said?” And usually I’d be reading at that point, and he could tell me, I mean he comprehended well at that point. He could tell me exactly what I read. I’d have to go back and re-read and say, “Did I really...?” And I did. I mean he heard it. But if I would make him sit still, he couldn’t remember it, because... and his comprehension in 1st grade
when he had to sit still was not good, but I think it was like he was like so worried about sitting still that he couldn’t sit still, listen to the teacher, take in what he was supposed to take in, and get it back out on paper. It was just too much just trying to sit still.

I – That’s an interesting observation.

C – …was going to be a lot for him. So just giving that part up at home and being able to move around, being able to get up, sit down. And I wouldn’t say that he is super ADHD, that it was that kind of thing, I just think he learns through movement, and being able… and it’s not even moving a pencil, per se,

I – More like a kinesthetic learner.

C - …just being able to…just if I can move around, and look around, I’m taking it in.

And he only likes true things. I mean we have 99% of the time read true stories. Everything I find has to do with everyday life. Even math, luckily enough when you directed me towards Math-U-See, they use every day, real life things. Because we farm, it worked out, because it seems like, and it may not be that way, but it almost seems like it was based sort of like an Amish kind of a, just a farm life kind of thing, how they would sell this, or do this with crops or whatever it was, going to the store. He could identify with that as being a real thing, and not just a “why do I care if I put three apples in the basket and pick 5 more.” You knew, kind of a thing, he was bringing them home to eat, to make a pie or whatever. Then he could relate to that. And that’s the way all of his lessons have been.

I – Hmm. That’s neat. So your original reasons were his reading delays and his frustration. (Interruption) And so you’ve hinted at some of the reasons with continuing is your discovering his learning style. But what are some of your other reasons that you’ve
continued to homeschool? You’ve mentioned that by middle school he wasn’t still up to where you wanted him to be with reading.

C – C__ and I never did school in a way that it looked like he got a grade and failed. If it didn’t work out, we did it again the next day. Or we just went over it until he at least I’d say 80-90% understood what we were covering. And it was never mark your papers. It was erase the answer and make it right. So that he could SEE the right answer. The other thing they started doing that they didn’t do with the other four kids was, you would know what it’s called. It’s like sight reading, but it’s write the word down the way you hear it. So if you hear *said* as *s-e-d*, you would write *s-e-d*. And they started doing that in Kindergarten. But C__’s mind worked in such a way that when he saw *s-e-d*, and the teacher didn’t correct it at that point, that’s how *said* was spelled, because that’s what he saw the first time. So if you didn’t correct something right away, it was ingrained that if I’m going to spell it, that’s the way it must get spelled. So I could tell that hadn’t changed even by 5th grade. And the amount of reading that was going to be involved, he was never going to just get through without being in special classes all day in school. And for C__, he was conscious enough to say you know… I mean even in 5th grade he would say, “You know I’m going to fail, Mom. You know if I go to school, I’m going to fail.” I would try to explain to him that he wasn’t really failing, that it just was going to be a different way of learning, and he would do things different. No, no. and I could just tell that it was just more aggravation. So it would just be irritating more to him and to have more aggravation. So we struggled through another four year to get to high school. Now knowing I guess we’re going to finish it out.

I – So you’re continuing to homeschool… And what grade is he going into now?
C – 10th grade now.

I – 10th. Oh, wow. So that’s a little bit past that middle school time.

C – Mmhmm.

I – And you talked about in 1st grade you had him tested, and he was diagnosed as having dyslexia.

C – Mmhmm.

I – And that was with the school psychologist?

C – Mmhmm.

I – Was that who did the testing?

C – I also went to a private psychologist on my own,

I – OK

C - …and they tested the same thing. And we did, it’s funny because a lot of people think that Sylvan Learning works. We tried Sylvan Learning, but C__ got to a point, and it just was like a wall. Maybe we didn’t stick it out long enough. Maybe if I’d have kept pushing him against that wall, we could have broke through the wall. But it never seemed to work. In B__, there’s a Masonic, this was in 1st grade, when we would go… 1st grade, no 2nd grade. I know I had homeschooled him, so it was 2nd grade. It is a specific dyslexic learning center. And we tried that for a year and a half, twice a week, we would drive to B__ to do this. And the same thing happened again. He would get so far, now it was better, because they taught phonics. And he hates repetition, and that program is very repetitive. But that got him so far, too, and then it just stopped. It just wasn’t going anywhere. So today I have to say that right now he’s reading more than he’s probably ever read. And he surprises me, but I need reading glasses now to read, and we’ll be some
place, and I’ll say, “Jeez, I can’t see that. What does that say?” And he’ll all of a sudden start reading, and then he’ll look at me. I said, “See I knew you could…” And he stops. You know. But it’s like, see I knew you could do it. So I don’t think he’s ever going to sit down and just read a book, unless it’s something that REALLY sparks his interest, that says I gotta get through this, because I gotta find out about something. But tractor stuff, I mean he does a lot of things on the internet with tractors and weather. And he looks at Lancaster Farmer and Farm Show. Farm Show’s a magazine where farmers have come up with an ingenious way to make a job easier... whether they build something… add something to a tractor, or change the way a wheelbarrow’s working for them for whatever specific job it is they’re doing. And he loves… he will read that stuff. And he’ll struggle through and now and then he’ll ask what a word is or whatever. Most kids are probably texting ferociously by his age. And he’s not a lot, but he has been a little bit, or I’ll say…because the girls like to text me, and I hate to text…

I – So he’s your secretary?

C – Takes forever. So I’m like text this back to L__ and tell her you know that yes we’re having this for supper. And then he’ll say, well how do you spell that. Sometimes I’ll say just spell it however, they’ll get it. And he gets close enough. Whatever letters C__ misses now, you could probably read it and know what he’s trying to say. He gets enough of the major sounds in. You know. But he’ll ask, and then I tell him how to spell it, and he’ll spell it. So it’s been good practice for him. Most parents are probably saying quit texting. And I’m like you can text all you want because it is a way that he’s getting

I – It’s practicing

C - …some practice in.
I – So when you had him tested by the private one, they confirmed the results, same kind of results?

C – Yes.

I – What special requirements does your state’s homeschool law have for homeschooling a child with some special needs?

C – To continue to educate him at his level. To get in the required days as the same with all other students. And cover the same subjects that would be required in class. I just cover them at a different level. Some things we can cover probably at more of a adult or college level, because I’m reading it to him. I’m not saying we’re reading college texts, but things that might be considered above grade level. But other things I’m still able to do below grade level. If I can find a decent English or geography book or something that might be 4th or 5th grade but it still could spark his interest, and I can get the grammar and English covered there. I can do that versus hitting 10th grade English, which might be… what is funny, we were cleaning out the closet the other day, and there’s a *Crime and Punishment* novel in there. I said, this is typical high school reading, you know all the older kids remember reading that. And I said, “Look at this, C__, you could be reading this probably this year in school.” Why would I do that?

I – And made a face.

C – But we’ve probably read more about Albert Einstein, and George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln, and Leonardo DaVinci, and Galileo, and all these others than anybody in school ever has. Their textbook might cover a paragraph or a chapter. And we’ve read books on it, because they spark his interest because they were true people that actually overcame and conquered something. And some of them have dyslexia just like he does,
or other learning. And they’ve all been told no more than once and still made it work. So I think he likes that.

I – So when you had him tested at the school in 1st grade, and they determined that he has dyslexia and then you decided to homeschool, did anybody say anything to you about you’re homeschooling a child that’s been identified as having a special need? Did you have to do anything different in your documentation to the school district?

C – Initially let me think, because even initially with the school I think before we completely decided on the homeschooling in 2nd grade, at some point in 1st grade we did set up an IEP for him.

I – That was another question I had. Go ahead.

C – So we had set up what were other possibilities. And we had, he had started with, they hadn’t actually had pull-out in the classroom that he was doing, but he was going to a reading specialist for some things in 1st grade. But that wasn’t uncommon for a lot of kids in 1st grade at that point. What else? What was the other specific thing you wanted to know?

I – They didn’t expect you to do anything different in your documentation because he had been identified?

C – Nope. I don’t think I’ve ever done anything extra.

I – You just submit your affidavit and your objectives?

C – Yep. They’ve never asked for anything more.

I – OK

C - I always just say we’re doing it at his grade... at his learning level.
I – Good. What help are you presently receiving to address your child’s special needs? Any kind of tutor, or support group, or services from a school, or independent therapy?

C – Nothing right now.

I – You said you had tried Sylvan a while ago.

C – We tried Sylvan.

I – And the Masonic Lodge.

C – And we’ve done the Masonic. Other than things that I’ve read. I’ve read several different books on dyslexia. I look up things on the internet that just remind me, especially when I get really frustrated because he’s not progressing where I think he should. Or reading like, I don’t even say reading I guess. You know his writing, his reading, everything isn’t where I think as a mom where I think I should have him, and I will re-read things and think, oh yeah. You know there’s a book about this is how your dyslexic child learns or something. It sets up things on a page that makes you get frustrated, because really that’s how frustrated they are when they are trying to look at a book. So it just reminds me, oh yeah, it’s not as easy, just because it’s easy for me to sit down and read this, it’s not as easy for him to sit down and read it. On the other hand I can’t walk around the room and do a number of other things, and take in what somebody’s just read for me as well as he can.

I – Focus on his strengths.

C – Or I can’t go out and work on a piece of equipment like he can. So I just need to keep remembering that what he lacks in one area, he way makes up for someplace else. And maybe just because I can read well, he’ll never read as well. But he figures out how to compensate and get by. And I’ve tried to help him do that, to especially know that you
don’t have to have the answer, but there are lots of places to get it. So the computer seems to be, and he doesn’t always have, there’s not always an audio part to it, but there’s a lot of things on the computer now he can look up and find that he sees and gets interested in just because maybe because of the color. Or maybe because of the way the website is animated through, and he can pick up things. And if he knows what he’s looking for, he’s really good about just searching it out and finding it. And I have tried to stress above and beyond for him that he doesn’t have to know the answer. He has to know where to go find the answer. Whether it’s to ask somebody, to look in a book or to go to the internet or the news or whatever, because he really likes current events and that kind of thing, so…

I – So you’ve sought out the support services for yourself, more to understand his perspective, not necessarily ongoing therapies and stuff for him.

C – Right.

I – Yeah, so you’ve got the resources there. I’ll let you eat a little ice cream there, let me think. Has he ever received services through a formal school system, since you’ve been homeschooling?

C – Nope.

I – What services would you like to receive that you’re not receiving now?

C – I don’t really know. I mean I’m sure there’s lots of services out there that I’m not aware of, that I just haven’t actively sought out and really looked for. I think the frustration of… and you can read so many different conflicting things about dyslexia. One story will read I got over it. And so many other things will say it’s something you never get over. You do learn to compensate for it, and you can certainly do other things.
You know. So it’s like… I don’t know. But I don’t really know if I’d look for anything in the school. I’m still probably not I would say a typical homeschooler. I still advocate that school is still a good place for a lot of kids.

I – Is there such a thing as…

C – If I boast a little bit, I can certainly boast and say that I am glad in the last year of watching C__ play basketball with the high s.. with the kids he’s playing with, I am really glad that he’s homeschooled. I mean I might get really frustrated that I don’t think that we get things covered that we should get covered, or that I don’t realize how to write down what has been covered. But my mom will ask me sometimes if I think I’ve done him a disservice by not having him in school, learning in a formal setting. And I don’t think I have. But, has he learned the same things every school kid has learned? No. But does he know other things that they’ll never know? A lot. Does he have manners? Yes. Does he know how to respect adults? Yes. Do I mind that his best friends might be adults and not all his age? I don’t have a problem with that at all. And I think that for him, he’s excelled. Would my other four have excelled as well? I don’t think so. I don’t know that I had the knowledge or the ability even for them. They all have brilliant minds, and not that C__ doesn’t. But he’s able to capture his things in a different way, and I’m able to help him find the things that he just needs as a necessity. They needed the friendships, but they needed the challenge that school offered them, I think. Would my older son say so? No, he might have been slightly dyslexic, he did have some struggles through school. But, I didn’t see the struggles in him that I saw in C__ and J__ has compensated and he is in the service, and he’s in charge of guys, and he’s done as well. Does he like to read? No. But he will read what he needs to read. But honestly like I said, that C__’s not exposed to
them - the drugs, and the smoking and the alcohol, that kids are exposed to now. I’m not upset about that. People ask him if he has a girlfriend yet. I’m like well, no he doesn’t, but he’s also not exposed to… and not that that’s a good or bad thing. I’m sure that eventually he will find a way, there will be a way that girls will be around or whatever. No I’m not upset. When I see him on the basketball court, and so many other coaches compliment him on what a good, not even his ability to play, but his, how would you say it? I don’t want to say his politeness on the court…because he plays…

I – Sportsmanship?

C – His sportsmanship, the sportsmanship that he shows on the court is always like top notch. He does not lose his temper on the court when he gets pushed or knocked down. And he plays at a very competitive spot underneath the basket all the time, where it’s really push, shove, jump… run into each other whatever… and he does not argue with the ref. He never argues with the coach. You know, he doesn’t argue with his teammates, or any other teammate. He doesn’t make bad comments when you’re running down the court, and two or three other kids on the team are like trying to say something to somebody as they’re walking away or as they’re going. He doesn’t do that, and he gets complimented for it. And..

I – He sees that’s important. And he’s playing on the school district’s team?

C – Yes.

I – OK. So that’s one area where you are tapping into some resources for the district

C –Right.

I - …and that also helps with the socialization aspect.
C – True. And W__ didn’t allow that until… they made that initially clear… although it didn’t really matter to me in 1st grade that he couldn’t attend, he couldn’t play sports. At that point he still had soccer and some other outside… and we weren’t into the… it’s not intramural… what do they call them… scholastic sports, PIAA sports at that point. But by the time he hit 7th grade W__ had opened it up that homeschoolers could participate.

I – Well in 2006 the law changed that mandated school districts…

C – OK, so that would have been about the right… yeah…

I - to allow homeschoolers to participate in the extra-curriculars.

C – Now in that respect, the only thing I have to do is, on Fridays I have to let the school district know that he’s met his requirements for the week, so that he can play the… so he’s eligible to play for the next week. And the way the athletic director sort of approached me about that was, I said, “Well, what do you mean? Because we homeschool.” And he said, “Well for any number of reasons if you decide that that’s his punishment, or that that’s his…. That he can’t play or participate in the following week, that’s your right as his teaching instructor to say that he’s not eligible to play, you know, if you need to use that.” So in that respect, that’s where it comes into play. But it’s just a requirement, every teacher in the district has to let them know on a Friday what students are or aren’t eligible to play the following week, or the following whatever, due to absences or anything else.

I – Have you ever had to play that card?

C – No.

I – Didn’t think so based on the other ways you were describing his behavior. What type of curriculum do you use in your homeschooling? You mentioned a few things before.
C – The major one I know is Math-U-See. English..er science I think there’s some Hayes. I think Hayes is the guy, he looks like a mad scientist up in the corner of the book. That’s hard, everybody’ll say certain people pick certain things like ABeka program or something like that. And I’ve never stuck with that. For the first 3 years at least, at least 3 years I bet, I probably had 3 or 4 different sets of curriculum throughout the year until something worked. If something didn’t work, I didn’t bang my head against the wall, I didn’t say “C___, we have to finish THIS book.” I’d just go find something else and get it and say let’s see if this works. With him, too much information on a page is way too overwhelming. Black and white is OK. A few pictures are a little better. Remember the Richard Scarry books?
I – Mmmh.

C – That have like…

I - Yes.

C – Not for C___. Too much.

I – That would be over-stimulating.

C – Way too much. You could just see him just starting to go crazy. It’s like what am I supposed to see, and where is it? Way too much simulation. So I just look, and if we have an English book and it’s all about fairytales or something, forget it.

I – It has to be real.

C - We need to go find something else that’s based on real stories.

I – So you’ve learned his learning styles and his preferences.

C – Right.

I – Very good. And you’ve pulled in a lot of biographies.
C – Right.

I - You did a lot of work with timelines, I’ve seen that. How about the spelling that seems to be elusive?

C – We’ve adapted a really good thing that we used for a few years, and last year we sort of called it our year in review. We sort of went over everything we that we had gone through, whether it was our timelines, just to say, oh yeah, this is when that happened. And you know what, this happened, too, at the same time. And with the spelling, I honestly can’t remember where I read it, if it was one of the dyslexic books, or if it was in a curriculum book that I have, but it works. Awesome. It was in a book about spelling backwards. Who would think that a child with dyslexia could learn a word by spelling it backwards? But I color coordinate… not color coordinate, each syllable is a different color, and bright, not anything that might fall into the background. Like the really light gels or something wouldn’t work, but bright color, and spell the word out on the card. We talk a little about the word. We say the syllables. We go over the definition of what the word is. And then he looks at the card. He spells it forward, and he spells it backwards. If he doesn’t get it right, then he looks at the card again, and he spells it forward and backwards. To this day he can still spell those words backwards as well as and he can spell them forward. And he remembers, when we did the reviews, throughout, each time, there was minimal words he didn’t remember. Now if he saw them written in a book, I’m not sure they would be as memorable, because of the colors, so that’s maybe a downfall to learning those words in that respect. But it was a huge help of getting him over the minimal vocabulary, spelling word kind of thing. It was huge to be able to say look at those words that you’ve accomplished. You know even for a confidence booster for him.
I – Wow.

C – …more than anything.

I – So you do a lot of handmade curriculum that goes along with the other things that you’re studying?

C – Right. I honestly don’t buy into, if you don’t know how to spell the word, go look it up in the dictionary.

I – You have to know how to spell…

C – As a child I never figured it out and to tell C__ that I have never figured that out. How would tell somebody to go look it up if they don’t know how to spell it.

I – You have to know how to spell it to find it.

C – …to go find it. Now if you don’t know the meaning, I can understand that. But this whole thing when teachers come up, “You don’t know how to spell it, go look it up.” How am I going to know what it is if I can’t get close? How am I going to know?

I – So how would you describe his educational progress?

C – I think it was slow. But I guess I could say slow and steady.

I – That’s a positive statement.

C – Well you certainly know, we didn’t move as fast as I wanted to move or I thought we should move. And he doesn’t get as excited about things. I have to say now I’m so stressed that my excited isn’t always there like it used to be. But, he doesn’t get excited. I can bring home a new book and be so excited to get it started. He will never share that same excitement with me. It’s like OK, Mom, we’ll do this.

I – Because it’s still school.
C - Because it’s still school. But I have a volcano at home for him to make now. That might be interesting and fun. Building Legos that are huge, like trains and construction things and farm equipment, that’s awesome. To just take Legos and build for the fun of it, No. He sees no sense in that. There’s just no sense. That’s probably been the hardest thing to understand. I have a lot more… would have a lot more creativity in me than he does. He’s just very concrete…

I - …and practical.

C – Practical. If it doesn’t do this, why would I bother.

I – Well, now that you’ve taken on the high school thing, how do you plan to have him graduate?

C – Good question (whispered). (Laughter) Well we’ll continue to progress through and we’ll do the standard English things we need to do. I found, again I’m think I’m going to try the steward, the Math-U-See curriculum this year. And work on that with him, because again it will be like more everyday learning checkbook, some things that he’ll need to know just for basics of life to go through. He is definitely doing farm work. He gardens. He works on the equipment. I have to tell you… I don’t know if I told you this in the fall… in the spring. Did I tell you about his taking pictures of things to get them fixed?

I – Huh-uh.

C - He takes a picture if the combines broke down or anything on the tractors are broke down, and his dad’s working in the gas fields now. I wouldn’t have a clue how to tell him how to fix anything. So he takes this phone and takes a picture of what’s broken and sends it to his dad, so his dad can tell him what he needs to fix or parts he needs to get.
I – That’s pretty innovative.

C – Nobody ever told… that’s just something C__ thought of on his own to do this. Because I said to B__, did you tell him? No, he just sent me a picture of this… Dad this is broke, here’s a picture. I’m sending you a picture. Tell me what I need to do. So that’s something he’s worked out to like work around things. So I’ll continue to do that kind of thing. C__ would really like to build a pond. Like just a small kind of pond.

I – Maybe getting into landscaping.

C – …with the landscaping thing. He’s been mowing our grass for several years. I never, there’s not a day a week I have to say, C__ does the grass need mowed? He just does it. He takes care of the pool, the pool chemicals. Opening the pool, and getting ready to close it. He’ll say, “Mom, I need your help. I need to do this, or I need help to get the vacuum in.” So he continues to work on those kinds of things.

I – So is there a way to capture these practical skills for high school credit?

C – Well I’m hoping. I mean I have to figure out how to exactly write it down and get it all put in. That’s another one of those things…See he’s doing these things every day, but I’m not adept at writing down these things every day, to say this is where this counts. Because some of it is like every day…you know for me, now I didn’t count it this year, but I have counted it in years past, but he watched every bit of the World Series. You look at the sports aspect of it, I see him learning about Japan or learning about any of the number of countries that came to play. Because they give such a background on those kids and those countries… But he’s picking up that just as much as he’s watching the game.

I – It’s some social studies.
C – He’s hearing all of that about all different countries, whether it’s what they’re doing in California, or what they’re doing in… I honestly didn’t watch it all, so I don’t know… Saudi Arabia or Japan. You know any of those places. He’s picking up on all of that, too. When we watch the Olympics it’s not just because he’s watching the sport. He also retains that kind of thing. Like I said a few years ago, the one kid that he plays basketball with is originally from Ecuador. And when he told C__ where he was from, C__ told him right where… oh that’s in South America, or Central America, and said right where it was and everything. And he said, “Wow, you know that? Nobody in school even knows where that is!” But…

I – Yea!!!

C – That’s just the difference in C__ being more fact… and I don’t know how to capture… I mean current events every day. For you or I maybe it isn’t an everyday thing, but whether it’s, he watches a good hour plus of news every night, world news and local news. He looks things up on the internet, the weather, he’s following it on his phone. There’s a storm coming, Mom! Are you sure? Yes, it’s right there, don’t you… and then he’ll run outside and say yep, there’s the… I mean he’ll like, has to check, if it’s raining outside, he has to check his computer to see if it’s supposed to be raining on the computer. It’s raining, are they telling… yeah, they are, they’re telling us it’s raining. I mean some of it is sort of funny, but it’s like, for him it makes it more real.

I – Science.

C – I guess it makes it more real, it’s like do they really know what they’re talking about. Look it’s here. Oh, yeah, it’s here too. Maybe Joe S__ didn’t say it’s going to rain, but it says it’s going to rain on the…
I – Weather channel

C – …radar here on the weather channel. And it’s raining outside, it all came together, it worked.

I – Do you have any contact with any other homeschooling families?

C – I don’t. (chuckle). Most of the parents I do know, their kids are all in school.

I – Well that fits in with your older four.

C – Yeah.

I – So what would you say is the most satisfying aspect of homeschooling a struggling learner?

C – I think for me is that he doesn’t have to face the constant failure every day. Because regardless of where you’re at in school, and I understand they have to go by some kind of grading system, and so many are going to pass and so many are going to fail, or whatever their system is, whether it ends up being the bell curve… or it just ends up being this is your grade, and you got it wrong… even if the answer maybe could have been right in another way. You know, well the book doesn’t say… I’m just glad… C__’s personality could never have accepted that kind of failure. As a young kid I think we would have broke him and his spirit. And I think there are kids out there they face so many other problems but that does become a problem. Why is it so important to have that grade that says… you know, is pass/fail not good enough, maybe. You know, like you accomplished enough… to say half way, maybe I didn’t teach him as much as school would teach him, as far as many different avenues, you know. Did we learn to play a recorder? No, we tried, but… yeah, we’re learning to play the recorder!
I – (laughter) and this tape recorded can’t show your facial expression. You just rolled your eyes.

C – No, I tried, I honestly tried. I begged him. I said, let’s play the drums. No! I mean we were not… the interest was not there. In school you know you would have faced year after year of a music class that he would have gotten nothing out of. Did we learn about Bach and three or four other musicians? Yeah. We read about the stories of them growing up as a child, walking miles and miles and miles to get to a cathedral or something to listen to somebody play the piano or the organ, you know, and what it took for them to get lessons, and how they played for a king or a queen or whatever.

I – So you had some music history?

C – So we did those things. And that was all fine with him. But to actually just, and we’ve listened to some, thanks to your suggestion, a few years in school, listened to some easy listening, classical kind of music. But for him it was like, why do we have to have that on? Things that you wouldn’t think would annoy him, annoyed him. It was like, the TV noise doesn’t annoy him. That kind of a noise, because I think it’s not natural to him. It’s just not something that’s normally there. So now it becomes an extra.

I – And it might be stimulating a different area of his brain.

C – Stimulation, he didn’t need.

I – So what’s been the most frustrating aspect of homeschooling a struggling learner?

C – Arguing with him. (laughter)

I – What!? What do you have to argue about?

C – Why do we have to do this?

I – About the things he doesn’t want to learn, doesn’t see a reason…
C – Why do we have to do this?

I – So then what advice would you give to other parents considering homeschooling a struggling learner?

C – I really think if you’re going to homeschool, make sure you’re doing it for reasons that you can live with and you decide, not because somebody says it’s the best thing in the world to do. That because it worked for them… honestly it could work for a mom with 9 kids. I could not see myself… I can’t stay focused, I would never have stayed focused. The grandkids now have thrown me off kilter, and C__, I mean we could have done more if we weren’t dealing with 2 little ones too all the time. And it’s just the way our life has gone. But to do it, have an open mind. Be willing to change. I had to be willing, I really had to be willing to change, and I still rely on books a lot more than a lot of other homeschoolers might rely on books. They might be able to just, pick up on all the more, I mean learning without as many books as I do. But I need them at least to get started.

I – But you’ve got your style down, too.

C – And then I can go from there. But definitely be open minded enough, especially with a challenged learner. Because somebody said ABeka works for them, it doesn’t have to work for you. Or because one math curriculum worked for somebody, it may not be the math curriculum that works for you. And regardless, just be open minded enough to see that it’s not working for you or for your child that it’s time to change it. Whether it’s a few dollars or whatever it is through the year, if that’s what it takes, it’s not worth the struggle on both parts to finish a year thinking, we got this we HAVE to finish it. You now, we have to finish THIS book. Another book you might have finished a lot faster and
enjoyed yourself a whole lot more. And take advantage of, I mean we’ve taken advantage of the history channel and the history, the DVDs and different things… We buy them, but you could rent them or whatever. That are good… entertaining and informational and educational, I think.

I – Very good. Is there anything else you’d like to share?

C – I don’t think so. Open-mindedness.

I – That’s the big deal.

C – Yep. Just make it right for all of you. I spent the first twenty-some years, I spent twenty years trying to justify that I was a stay at home mom. And now trying to justify that homeschooling C__ was the right thing to do. And there are times where I say would he have been better off in school. If I say it to him, or if I get so mad at him sometimes, because I say do you want to go to school and do this for 7 hours? No! You now I can’t do it that way. You know we have to do it this way. Brings us both back to reality sometimes as to why we’re doing it. And it has been a good experience, it really has. I mean I’m proud of him. They were all good kids, but he’s done a good job.

I – Very good. Well thank you for sharing, and I guess I can turn this off.
APPENDIX H

TRANSCRIPT REVIEW FORMS
Appendix H

Transcript Review Forms

Please complete as you go. In reviewer column, use your initials. Then put an ‘X’ in the appropriate column for each transcript, and indicate by highlighting on the actual transcript areas needing change.

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APPENDIX I

VALIDATION PROCESS
Appendix I

Validation Process

On July 12, 2010 this researcher emailed her revised list of interview questions to several colleagues familiar with research procedures.

I. Director of the Interpreting Program at Bloomsburg University, and doctoral candidate at Walden University. Email interaction is as follows:

From: Patti Stoudt [mailto:pstoudt@ptd.net]
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2010 1:44 PM
To: J_______
Subject: Dissertation

Hi J______.

How are your studies going? Mine slowed down with me being sick, but are picking up again.

I am proceeding with my dissertation, regarding homeschooling students with special ed. needs. I am building my study on a previous dissertation study, with permission from the author, Dr. Jane G. Duffey. Her study involved subjects in many states, where mine is specific to PA. I am taking a qualitative approach looking for descriptive information rather than statistical results. I am using Dr. Duffey’s interview questions, but have added a few of my own. Therefore I need feedback from colleagues knowledgeable in research to ensure that my questions flow with the format, that they are not leading in any way, and that they are reliable.

Would you be willing to look over the list of questions?

Dr. Duffey’s original list had 12 questions. I have added 6 more. Is it possible to identify which 6 have been added? What clues help indicate those 6 as being added? What advice do you have for me?

Thank you!
Patti Stoudt

From: J_______
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2010 8:27 AM
To: Patti Stoudt
Subject: RE: Dissertation

Patti
I can’t tell what questions were added. I don’t know the original 12 questions so I guess you did a really nice job!
I have started chapter 4 and I hope to finish it up this week and then move on to chapter 5. I am trying to get as much done before the semester begins.

From: Patti Stoudt [mailto:pstoudt@ptd.net]
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2010 9:12 AM
To: J_______
Subject: RE: Dissertation

Thank you, J_______!
Actually I added # 4, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18. Now knowing that does it shed any light or evoke any further feedback?

Keep up the good work with yours! I had a slump with being sick for so long, but know back on my feet and getting powerpoint ready to present to committee for the nod to start working!

Patti

From: J_______
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2010 9:41 AM
To: Patti Stoudt
Subject: RE: Dissertation

Patti
I think your questions are clear. I had to read over #4 twice but I think that they are clear enough to get the answers you want.

2. JM, Administrator in a parochial school, doctoral candidate at Walden University
----- Original Message -----
From: "P Stoudt" <ppmnh@ptd.net>
To: "JM"
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2010 12:45:51 PM
Subject: Dissertation

Hi JM,

How are the studies going? Can I ask a favor?

I am proceeding with my dissertation, regarding homeschooling students with special ed. needs. I am building my study on a previous dissertation study, with permission from the author, Dr. Jane G. Duffey. Her study involved subjects in many states, where mine is specific to PA. I am taking a qualitative approach looking for descriptive information rather than statistical results. I am using Dr. Duffey’s interview questions, but have added a few of my own. Therefore I need feedback from colleagues knowledgeable in research to ensure that my questions flow with the format, that they are not leading in any way, and that they are reliable.
Would you be willing to look over the list of questions?

Dr. Duffey’s original list had 12 questions. I have added 6 more. Is it possible to identify which 6 have been added? What clues help indicate those 6 as being added? What advice do you have for me?

Thank you!
Patti

From: JM  
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2010 1:07 PM  
To: P Stoudt  
Subject: Re: Dissertation

I've printed out the questions so that I can examine them closely. I'll get back to you later this week.
JM  
From: "P Stoudt" <ppmnh@ptd.net>  
To: JM  
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2010 12:22:58 PM  
Subject: RE: Dissertation  
Thank you. If you do send me feedback, please include your credentials and current doctoral program info.
Thx and hugs!
Patti

From: JM  
Sent: Wednesday, July 14, 2010 10:28 PM  
To: P Stoudt  
Subject: Re: Dissertation

Hey! Just spent some time with your dissertation questions.
Just a few questions . . .
1 - Will all of the families that complete the survey have a child with an diagnosed disability? How will you identify those families?

2 - You said that the original survey was administered in several states, but yours will only be used in PA. Question #4 specifically asks about "your state." Are you using this question to examine the parent's awareness of the PA's state requirements or is that wording from the initial survey?

3 - Do any of the home school curriculum provide differentiated instructional strategies for parents? I was wondering about question #10 - did they chose their curriculum because it offered differentiated materials?

I was unable to discern any difference between the questions/authors. I think that each of your questions is very concise and I didn't detect anything that I felt was leading. I particularly liked that you had specific questions regarding the child's academic and
social progress.
   I think you're on your way!!! So exciting!!
   Info for me:
   MSEd Old Dominion University
   MSEd - Special Education - University of Maryland
   EdD (Candidate)- Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning -
   Completed 36 hours Walden University
   Did you need information about my state certifications?
   I'm thrilled that you asked me to help you with this! I'm so happy that we're on
   this journey at the same time!
   Love,
   JM

3. H___, Director of Pennsylvania Homeschool Accreditation Agency, PhD -
   Education:

       -----Original Message-----
       From: Patti Stoudt [mailto:pstoudt@ptd.net]
       Sent: Monday, July 12, 2010 1:41 PM
       To: Director@phaa.org
       Subject: Help with my dissertation? - Patti Stoudt

       Hi H___.

       I following up with people who have crazy enough to say to let them know if I
need anything in my dissertation process.

       I am proceeding with my dissertation, regarding homeschooling students with
special ed. needs. I am building my study on a previous dissertation study, with
permission from the author, Dr. Jane G. Duffey. Her study involved subjects in many
states, where mine is specific to PA. I am taking a qualitative approach looking for
descriptive information rather than statistical results. I am using Dr. Duffey’s
interview questions, but have added a few of my own. Therefore I need feedback
from colleagues with doctorates, knowledgeable in research to ensure that my
questions flow with the format, that they are not leading in any way, and that they are
reliable.

       Would you be willing to look over the list of questions?

       Dr. Duffey’s original list had 12 questions. I have added 6 more. Is it possible
to identify which 6 have been added? What clues help indicate those 6 as being
added? What advice do you have for me?

       Thank you!
       Patti Stoudt
From: H____
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2010 10:23 AM
To: 'Patti Stoudt'
Subject: RE: Help with my dissertation? - Patti Stoudt

They sound good to me!

4. L____ - Ph.D. Home Ec./Textiles, Public School Teacher

----- Original Message ----- 

From: P Stoudt
To: L____
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2010 1:38 PM
Subject: Help with Patti's dissertation?

Hi L____,

I following up with people who have crazy enough to say to let them know if I need anything in my dissertation process.

I am proceeding with my dissertation, regarding homeschooling students with special ed. needs. I am building my study on a previous dissertation study, with permission from the author, Dr. Jane G. Duffey. Her study involved subjects in many states, where mine is specific to PA. I am taking a qualitative approach looking for descriptive information rather than statistical results. I am using Dr. Duffey’s interview questions, but have added a few of my own. Therefore I need feedback from colleagues knowledgeable in research to ensure that my questions flow with the format, that they are not leading in any way, and that they are reliable.

Would you be willing to look over the list of questions?

Dr. Duffey’s original list had 12 questions. I have added 6 more. Is it possible to identify which 6 have been added? What clues help indicate those 6 as being added? What advice do you have for me?

Thank you!
Patti Stoudt

From: L____
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2010 2:00 PM
To: P Stoudt
Subject: Re: Help with Patti's dissertation?

Hi Patty,

My guess is that you added questions #3 - #7. Those questions are longer and request a guided response.

All of the questions are very good.
Will you be asking parents to fill out a questionnaire or will you be visiting them and recording their responses?
If they fill out a questionnaire, you might let them know that a time commitment will be involved. I first did a questionnaire and then was asked to visit and record answers.....my best answers were from my personal visits!

Love and prayers,
L____

From: P Stoudt
To: 'L____'
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2010 6:52 PM
Subject: RE: Help with Patti's dissertation?

Hi L____,

Thank you for your prompt response. I will be doing taped interviews with parents who are homeschooling children with special needs. Transcription will be my biggest undertaking, and then analysis of those transcripts. But I'm excited!

Actually I added # 4, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18. Now knowing that does it shed any light or evoke any further feedback?

May I please share your response with my committee when I present my proposal in power point form in the near future? Also, will you please share with me your full name, what your doctorate is in, and your address. Just for documentation.

Thank you again!
Patti

From: L____
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2010 3:03 PM
To: P Stoudt
Subject: Re: Help with Patti's dissertation?

Hi Patty,

I am glad that you will be doing taped interviews...maybe you can find someone at the college who is learning to transcribe and would be willing to help you out!

All of the questions are good, so I don't have any further comment on the ones that you added to the original research!

You may share my response.

I got my doctorate before I was married, so my doctorate has L____ on it. I
earned my PhD in Home Economics: Clothing, Textiles and Merchandising from Oklahoma State University in 1981.

L____

Know that I am praying for you!
L___

5. D____ (Ph.D., University of Kansas, 1998) and S_____ (D.Ed., The Pennsylvania State University, 1987)

On July 21, 2010 this doctoral student met D____ and S_____at Bloomsburg University with to discuss the interview questions I have determined to use in my research. Both individuals have earned doctoral degrees and work with graduate students in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program at Bloomsburg University.

This researcher presented them with the proposed 18 interview questions: 12 from the original seed study (Duffey, 2000), and 6 which she had added. When asked, they could not identify which 6 were not original questions. S____ pointed out that questions 4 & 9 were worded as yes/no questions and perhaps should be edited to reflect open-ended questions. When asked, they both reported that no question seemed leading or would give respondents pressure to answer in a particular way. Both D____ and S____ expressed concern over the length of the list, suggesting that this student should eliminate some questions, perhaps even from the original list, that didn’t pertain to the heart of my study. This student asked if it was OK to amend the list of questions from the original study.

They recommended adding a short written questionnaire giving demographic/biographic information to enhance the study, but not necessarily to be used for quantitative analysis. They recommended perhaps emailing the interview questions to the participants in advance, to allow them to think about their responses and to even put them in writing to be reminders during the interview process, hopefully cutting down on the interview time. They recommended having the participants return their written thoughts, to help with the transcription process.
APPENDIX J

INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE
Evaluators?

You may use the services of the homeschool evaluator of your choice. You are NOT required to have a special education certified evaluator. Those qualifications are only for the letter accompanying your affidavit if you choose to go that route.

However, many families have stated how helpful and supportive their evaluator is as they deal with their children’s special needs.

So choose your evaluator wisely:
- Someone familiar with homeschooling
- Someone familiar with the homeschool law.
- Someone familiar with special needs and resources available.

RESOURCES


HOMESCHOOLING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

To Be Labeled…
Or Not To Be Labeled…
That is the Question!

Can something be done?
Of Course!

By Pati Stout
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
2011

Take steps to find support for yourself as you embark on homeschooling.
Labeling

Many parents state they want their children to be able to live without the embarrassment of being labeled.

Labels can lack focus on the real person inside, possibly leading to lower self-esteem.

Parents should consider not avoiding labels, as they can inherent value. Labels can help parents:

- Avoid denial.
- Understand why their child is struggling.
- Find resources to address the struggles.
- Focus on both strengths & weaknesses, not just weaknesses.

One parent stated, “I don’t like labels, but I’ve learned not to fear them” (Field, 2005).

Diagnosing

WHERE DO WE START?

If you have noticed your child struggling with learning… Perhaps taking longer than other children his age…. Or knowing facts one day and forgetting them the next… it’s OK to get some help.

You can talk to your family doctor about your concerns and ask for a referral. Do not take NO for an answer. You know your child best. Ask for a referral for a consult or to establish a baseline for future comparison.

Assessment

You can also ask other parents where they have taken their children with similar struggles. Make an appointment for a consultation and possible assessment or evaluation (different from your annual homeschool evaluation).

- Pediatrician
- Neurologist
- Psychologist
- Audiologist
- Speech-Language Pathologist… or other

Get a diagnosis so you know what is going on.

Identifying

NOW WHAT?

Decide if you want your school district to be aware of your child’s struggles or diagnosis.

Identify?

- If district professionals helped with the diagnosis, they are already aware.
- If your district is homeschool-friendly, you may be able to get some support services through them.
- In your child’s yearly educational objectives with your affidavit, include objectives of how you will address his special needs.
- Have a special education teacher or psychologist write a letter to submit with your affidavit stating that your objectives do address the child’s special needs and that person approves your program.

Not Identify?

- If your district is not already aware of your child’s struggles…
- If you district does not offer services to homeschoolers…
- If you prefer to maintain privacy…
- Submit your affidavit and educational objectives without drawing attention to the special needs.
- Continue to address the special needs on your own.
APPENDIX K

RESOURCES SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS
## Appendix K

### Resources Suggested by Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Language Arts</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Mason methods</td>
<td>ACE Paces</td>
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<tr>
<td>A&amp;O Monarch</td>
<td>Write Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td><strong>Visual Manna</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Math-U-See</td>
<td>McGuffeys, old English books, classic literature</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Teaching Textbooks</em></td>
<td><em>Comprehensive Curriculum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saxon</td>
<td>Queen Homeschool</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Alpha Omega</em></td>
<td><em>Shurley English</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SRA Math</td>
<td><em>Alpha Omega Life Pacs</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Right Start Math</td>
<td><em>Switched-On Schoolhouse</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life of Fred</td>
<td><em>Alpha Puppets</em> (phonics)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math on the Level</td>
<td>Orton-Gillingham method (dyslexia)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td><strong>Easy Grammar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit studies</td>
<td><em>Great Leaps</em> (fluency)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KONOS units</td>
<td><em>Earobics</em> (phonemic awareness)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apologia</td>
<td><em>Reading Milestones</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Switched-On Schoolhouse</em></td>
<td><em>Spell to Write and Read</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>District textbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hayes</td>
<td>Bob Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Considering God’s Creation</em></td>
<td>All About Spelling (for dyslexia)</td>
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<td><strong>Answers in Genesis</strong></td>
<td><em>Spelling Power</em></td>
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<td><strong>Social Studies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Homemade flashcards</strong> (Freed &amp; Parsons)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>KONOS</td>
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<td><em>Mystery of History</em></td>
<td>Dr. Tony Attwood</td>
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<td><em>Time Travelers</em></td>
<td>Future Horizons Workshops</td>
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<td><em>Sonlight</em></td>
<td><em>Brain Gym</em></td>
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<td><em>Bob Jones</em></td>
<td>Weighted pets</td>
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<td><em>Timelines</em></td>
<td>Herbal supplements</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Beka (Textbooks &amp; DVDs)</td>
<td>Attend - herbal for focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>District textbooks</td>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lapbooks</td>
<td>Super Nu Thera – natural for kids on spectrum</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOS</td>
<td><strong>Organizations</strong></td>
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<td><em>A Time for Learning</em></td>
<td>Homeschool Legal Defense Association HSLDA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Online Resources</strong></td>
<td>Office of Vocational Rehabilitation OVR</td>
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<tr>
<td>myaudioschool.com</td>
<td>Behavioral Services - County Level</td>
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<td>currclick.com</td>
<td>National Association for Child Development NCAD</td>
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