

Vermont Home Education Network

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Senate Education Committee Vermont Home Education Network (VHEN) Testimony of Retta Dunlap

I am a retired homeschooling mom. I homeschooled my children K-12 and on into college. My youngest is now 27 years old. I have lead a local homeschool group, been on the boards of statewide groups and now advocate and lobby for homeschooling in the State House. I still answer emails and phone calls from public/private school parents seeking information about homeschooling and homeschooling parents needing help. I even get calls from public school parents needing help in dealing with their local school. I never talk parents into homeschooling as it is a tough job and you have to be driven to do it.

Vermont homeschoolers are connected to each other.

Other groups over the years: (not currently active)

Vermont Home Educators Association (worked on the law in 1987)
Christian Home Educators of Vermont (has come and gone over the years)
Vermont Association of Home Educators (during the Maple case years)

How homeschoolers connect:

- **Message boards:** There are multiple Yahoo groups for Vermont homeschoolers. VHEN has and I moderate the biggest one in Vermont with nearly 600 homeschoolers on it. I also moderate another one for Christian homeschooling Moms at nearly 150 members. There are others not connected to VHEN that I can post information on.
- **Email lists:** I have an email list of 600 names on it that I send out emails too.
- **Facebook pages:** *Homeschooling Vermont Chat Group* and *Twin State Homeschooling/ Unschooling Resources (VT & NH)* and others
- **Local support groups:** Parents get together to create enrichment programs, field trips, field days, and simply get together to enjoy each other's company at picnics.

Who are homeschoolers:

Parents come from all walks of life. From Christian to Pagan, left to right politically, or no label at all. They have college degrees or only high school diplomas and even someone without a high school diploma. Some are licensed teacher and some have never taught anyone. Yet all stand on common ground: we support the liberty of the parent to direct the educational life of a child from the home.

What homeschoolers do:

Homeschooling is a broad term that covers many facets of homeschooling. As the parents/families are different so is the educational style. Unschooling, which is NOT "no schooling" is parent intensive in that the parent must make sure the learning environment is filled with educational opportunities for the child to explore. At the other end of the spectrum is a traditional style which is workbook/classroom driven which is child intensive as the child must do a lot of bookwork. Most commonly, you will find homeschooling to be a mix of the two. Homeschooling works because it is one on one learning tutorial style of education - the best form of education there is.

History of the Statute:

Pre 1987 – status of homeschooling in state was approval

1987 – 166b was passed into law removing approval and made this a notification statute

1989 – The Agency of Education was given a position, called the home study consultant, to oversee the home study program

1998-2000 – Maple case – according to VT Supreme Court this is not an approval statute but a notification statute and merely receiving the enrollment notice signals parent's intent

2006 – Changes made to reduce paper work on both families and the then Department of Education, now an Agency

This statute has work for over 30 years showing that it was a carefully craft statute which balanced the State's interest in the education of a child with the Parent's right to educate their own child. Furthermore, this statute is intentionally prescriptive as to what the Agency can ask for to satisfy this interest while protecting the liberty of the parent to choose this type of education for their child.