

**Submission to**

**Manitoba's Commission on  
Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education**

**Made by**

**Manitoba Association for Schooling at Home (MASH)**

**May 30, 2019**



## **A Short Overview of the Current State of Home Education in Manitoba**

All education, home-based or not, benefits from the significant involvement of a parent.

It is important to recognize that “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” as stated in Article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and also that the **Manitoba Public Schools Act explicitly recognizes home education as a legal option in Manitoba**. We emphasize that home education is not “allowed” by the government, it is the right of parents to home educate their children and the government is obligated to accommodate that right.

In Manitoba, home education involves the following:

- Notifying the government that a child will be home educated no later than September of the year the child turns 7, or within 30 days of withdrawal from a public school. (Note that this is not *registering* or *requesting*, but *notifying*).
- Providing the government with an educational plan and two progress reports a year (<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/ind/homeschool/legislation.html>)

The current ministry-approved forms for notification and progress reports consist of identification information and three blank lines for each of four basic subjects. Progress reports include a checkbox to indicate “satisfactory progress.”

There are liaisons working for Manitoba Education and Training that are responsible for collecting notification forms and progress reports. These liaisons are also resources for parents, organizations, and the general public who have questions about the process.

No official high-school diploma is granted if a student continues home education through Grade 12. This is not a concern for most home-educated graduates as it is not usually a hindrance to most post-secondary educational institutions or to other future plans. There are, however, some post-secondary programs that currently deny entry to home-educated graduates.

Home-educating families in Manitoba do not receive any funding from the government.

Home education has been repeatedly shown to provide quality social and educational outcomes for children. Home-educated children do as well or better than their peers in post-secondary, in volunteerism, in political awareness, and in general happiness.

(See: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ893891>; <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED556234.pdf>; <https://books.google.ca/books?id=AM50DQAAQBAJ&dq> and <https://www.othereducation.org/index.php/OE/article/view/10>)

## **Overview - Continued**

Nearly 2% of children in Manitoba are home educated, and the number of children being home educated has grown an average of 8% since 2000 (see [https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/sch\\_enrol/index.html](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/sch_enrol/index.html)).

**Home education saves Manitoba about \$22 million dollars a year.** This savings is based on the 3,708 students enrolled at home in 2018 against the average public school expense of approximately \$6,000/child.

## AREA OF FOCUS - Long-Term Vision

- In general, we feel that **the current system of oversight is working**. It is reasonable, non-intrusive, clear, and minimal. It results in educated adults that are successfully moving into post-secondary institutions and beyond.
- **It is imperative that home-educated students receive access to non-educational services (such as speech and occupational therapy) which are currently being denied to them by school administrators and school boards.**
- We have a dream that **educational administration and governing boards would be more open to meeting with home-educating parents and groups to learn** more about alternative education and ways that they could work together to benefit the education of all children.

## **AREA OF FOCUS - Student Learning**

- It has long been recognized that there are many approaches to education and that an educational approach that fits the needs and desires of a child is significantly more effective than one-size-fits-all teaching methods. This is the ultimate beauty of home education.
- Home educators value the ability to provide an equivalent education, as required by law, in unique and non-standard ways using non-traditional resources, activities, scheduling, and evaluations. The long term result is exactly the same, an educated child, but the methodology can look very different. **The current progress forms generally allow for this flexibility, and we look forward to continued work with government liaisons who honour this unique approach.**
- Reporting takes a significant amount of time for parents, especially those with multiple home-educated children. **Reporting should continue to be flexible, descriptive of actual progress** (rather than prescriptive “fill-in-the-blanks on this subject”), **minimal, and clear.** The current forms allow for this. **We are not interested in changing the current forms.**
- **It would be useful to educate liaisons and school administrators about the different styles and methods of home education.** This would go a long way towards helping home-educating parents provide customized programs for their children.

## **AREA OF FOCUS - Accountability for Student Learning**

- It has been repeatedly shown that more regulation of home education does not result in better educational outcomes. **More administration and regulation results in increased government cost and complexity but does not improve the quality or end result of a child's education.** (See: <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=EJ1138306&id=EJ1138306> and <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1220&context=alj>)
- There has been discussion recently about Letters of Completion that had been provided by Manitoba Education and Training on the request of post-secondary institutions. **We support Letters of Enrollment that identify only the years that a student was enrolled in home education and indicate that any additional details about the student's education be requested directly from the parent.**
- Standardized testing exists to evaluate schools so that they can be accountable to parents and taxpayers. Parents of home-educated students are already directly accountable for their child's education. They receive no funding so they are not accountable to the taxpayers. **Therefore, standardized testing is not relevant to home education.**
- **We object to standardized testing** of all kinds, whether voluntary or not.
- There are currently no testing requirements for post-secondary enrollment for home-educated students. If Manitoba Education and Training suggests even voluntary standardized testing for post-secondary entrance, it will make standardized testing a de facto standard as once some students provide it, it will be required by all. Therefore **we recommend that Manitoba Education and Training not promote standardized testing for home-educated students** and leave admission to post-secondary institutions in the hands of those institutions.
- There are unfortunately some post-secondary institutions and programs (such as apprenticeship programs) that do not accept home-educated graduates. As home education is a legitimate and legally-recognized form of education in Manitoba, home-educated students should not be discriminated in this way. **We would recommend that such organizations, especially if publically funded, be advised on how to best accommodate home-educated students.**

## AREA OF FOCUS - Governance

- **The current system of notification for home education is working.** The present regulations for notification are acceptable, reasonable, non-intrusive, clear, minimal, and they achieve their goals. There is research that strongly indicates that more regulation and control does not impact the educational outcomes of home-educated students at all, so a minimalist approach results in the least financial and administrative overhead for all. (See: <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=EJ1138306&id=EJ1138306> and <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1220&context=alj>)
- **We strongly recommend that home education stay under the direct authority of Manitoba Education and Training**, rather than moving to local school boards or schools. This will ensure consistency for all home-educating families and minimize administration.
- Local school principals are currently the sole point of contact for home-educating students who wish to take any classes at a school or to obtain non-educational services such as speech, occupational, and physical therapy, and other services that are commonly offered through schools. Principals' decisions are final, unappealable, and do not need to be supported or justified. **This often results in inconsistent access to classes, programs, and services that are the right of a child as a Manitoba citizen.**
- MASH and MACHS (the Manitoba Association for Christian Home Schools) recently met with the Department of Families to discuss the issue of access to these non-educational services especially as it applies to students with disabilities and many deficiencies were recognized. There is a significant gap in the provision of these services to home-educated children. **Home-educated children deserve access to non-educational services, and we would request support from the Department in navigating how to access these services which are only available through individual schools and school boards.**
- In the past, Manitoba Education and Training liaisons have varied in their standards of what constitutes "sufficient information" for notification and progress reports. There have been periods where far more information than the forms or the Act require has been demanded or "strongly suggested", or home visits (not required by the Act) have been, in effect, demanded.
- **We recommend the development of a process to investigate incidents of friction or disagreement between home-educating parents and government employees (liaisons.) This process would also allow for a parent to appeal decisions made by local principals and school officials regarding access to services.** This process would require the authority of the Minister to investigate and take appropriate action to ensure that all students in Manitoba have equal access to taxpayer provided services.

## **AREA OF FOCUS - Funding**

- **Home education saves the government a tremendous amount of money (about \$22 million dollars based on 3,708 home-educated students in 2018 who were educated without the average public school expense of approximately \$6,000/child).** Thousands of students are educated at home and do not require any funding or administration other than acceptance of notification and progress forms. Home education is beneficial to those families who choose to pursue it, and it provides continued savings in infrastructure and administration to the Department.
- **The Independent Education Unit of Manitoba Education and Training should be sufficiently funded and staffed.** As home-educating families deal directly with this office rather than with schools or school divisions (as it should be), sufficient resources to deal with this administration are all that is required. This funding is significantly less than that required for administration through school boards, schools or other mechanisms.
- **We currently expect and request no funding directly to home-educating families.** Home education is the responsibility of the parent, and we acknowledge that any government funding directly to home-educating families would have accompanying accountability that we do not wish to accept.



## **Who is MASH?**

The *Manitoba Association for Schooling at Home* (MASH) is one of the largest homeschooling group in the province (with over 600 members and 800 adherents) and the only inclusive secular group, representing all homeschoolers regardless of faith, philosophy, or points of view. Membership is open to anyone who agrees with the aims of the organization.

We are a group of homeschoolers based in Winnipeg, Manitoba but representing all of Manitoba that are working together to help each other make the best of our common home-educating experience.

- MASH is dedicated to creating a sense of community among homeschoolers throughout Manitoba.
- MASH actively promotes homeschooling by providing information to the Manitoba homeschooling community.
- MASH works as a liaison between homeschoolers and the Government of Manitoba.

Our website is <http://manitobahomeschool.com>

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