

# Homeschool community thriving in Las Cruces | Opinion

New Mexico is ranked last in the nation for education. According to US News, the 2024 [test results for Mayfield High School](#) (where my two teens would attend if we weren't homeschooling) show that only 9% of kids are proficient in math and 23% are proficient in reading. If kids can't read or do math, how can they be successful as adults? It's no wonder that LCPS enrollment has dropped by more than 1,000 students over the last few years.

In contrast, over the last 10+ years that I have been homeschooling and organizing a Las Cruces homeschool group, I've seen big growth in the number of homeschoolers as well as activities and classes for homeschooled kids, especially since 2020. When I ask parents why they pulled their kids out of school, common reasons include poor academics, classroom behavior issues, bullying, sexualization and indoctrination of kids. Nationally, homeschoolers [out-perform](#) kids who attend regular school in standardized testing. Beyond academics, homeschooled kids tend to be [happier, more responsible, and better-adjusted](#) in comparison to kids attending public school.



Homeschoolers in New Mexico are free to choose whatever curriculum works best for their kids. Some homeschoolers use off-the-shelf, all-in-one curriculums. Some pick and choose different curriculum options for each subject. I personally like to develop my own curriculum and unit studies year by year. It's been engaging to holistically study science, inventions, math, and history chronologically all together while we also explore foods, music, and folk tales from different regions. Now that my kids are in high school, they take a big part in setting their own learning goals and developing their

own curriculum semester by semester.

Homeschoolers are often asked, "but what about socialization?" However, there are many negative lessons and aspects of socialization at school, including bullying; age-segregation, which only gives kids the chance to interact with kids their own age; age hierarchy, where older kids are "too cool" to play with younger children; and undesirable lessons in pop-culture, such as early sexualization, sassy attitudes, and crass language.

In contrast, homeschooling socialization provides great benefits, including the opportunity for kids to form strong, loving relationships with their siblings; all ages socialization including pre-K through adults; a high ratio of parents to kids in social settings, such that any bullying or aggression can be quickly handled; and developmentally-appropriate exposure to sensitive topics including sexuality, drugs, language, etc.

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Here in Las Cruces, homeschooling families have many options for engagement with other kids and families. There are Christian and secular homeschool co-ops (in which parents team up to teach a variety of classes), clubs for nature outings and chess, band class, parkour class, PE class, and more. Roadrunner Homeschoolers, the secular homeschool group I organize for dozens of families, includes park days twice a month alongside activities such as field trips, spelling bees, and book clubs.

Homeschooling also gives families the flexibility to travel during the off-season when prices are lower and there are fewer tourists. For instance, last Fall my husband and I took our kids to Washington, D.C. and colonial Williamsburg on a week-long history and government field trip. More recently, my kids joined me on a work trip to Pennsylvania and Delaware, where they got to sit in on meetings with state officials, visit many dairy

farms, attend my farmer training class, explore Amish culture, and visit historic sites. These types of trips greatly expand learning and give kids a broader perspective.

Overall, the homeschool community is thriving in Las Cruces. Homeschooling provides an alternative pathway away from our failing public schools and into a supportive, vibrant community.

*Sarah Smith is a community advocate and homeschooling mother of two teens. She is also a natural healthcare practitioner and former NASA aerospace engineer. Sarah can be reached at [concernedform@gmail.com](mailto:concernedform@gmail.com).*