

**Exploring South Florida Homeschoolers' Desires for Public Homeschooling Programs: A
Basic Qualitative Study**

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Abstract

The problem is the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire among homeschooling families in South Florida. Homeschooling enrollment has grown by over 70% since the 2017–18 school year. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida on why they choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire. Guided by humanistic learning theory and ecological systems theory, this study addressed a gap in the literature regarding the needs of homeschoolers within public education frameworks. Fifteen parents of homeschooled students in South Florida were selected as participants through purposive sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's thematic coding. This study fills a gap in the literature by increasing understanding of homeschoolers' motivations for homeschooling and their needs for curriculum and program elements in a public homeschooling program. The results indicate that while facing some challenges and in need of support, homeschooling families value personalized curriculum choices, flexible schedules, control over teaching methods, and the opportunity to allocate more quality time as a family. Recommendations are provided for district policy changes to prioritize individual learner needs over standardized instructional models, including flexible scheduling, competency-based learning, and differentiated pathways.

Keywords: curriculum design, ecological systems theory, homeschooling, humanistic learning theory, public homeschooling programs, under-enrolled schools

Dedication

To my dear wife, Emily—

Thank you for being the steady light at the center of this long journey. You carried me through the starts and stops, the late nights and early mornings. Your faith in me, quiet, constant, and brave, never wavered, even when mine did. You were there in the ordinary ways that mattered most: bringing a warm mug to my desk, reminding me to breathe and rest. You listened when I murmured in frustration. You gave me space when I had to wrestle with an idea, and you pulled me back to balance when the work tried to take more than it should.

You matched my patience with your own, and somehow added humor where it seemed impossible to find. In the hardest stretches, your kindness was the anchor; in the best moments, your joke and laughter made them brighter. You have been my sounding board, my compass, and my favorite proof that hard work, perseverance, and hope can carry us through anything. This dissertation bears my name, but its heart carries yours—because every idea here was strengthened by your presence, and every page was made possible by your love.

For the sacrifices you made, the weekends you quietly surrendered, the everyday acts that added up to something extraordinary—thank you. I am endlessly grateful to you and endlessly proud to walk through life by your side. I dedicate this work to you in honor of our 50th anniversary, with love that grows deeper through every season we share.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Homeschool enrollment in the United States has increased over the last decade, growing from 3.4% of K–12 students in 2012 to 5.4% in 2021 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). During the pandemic, homeschool enrollment peaked at 11.1% in October 2020 but remained at around 6% in the 2022–23 school year and is expected to continue rising (Dee, 2023; National Center for Education Statistics, 2024; Watson, 2024). The increase in homeschool enrollment came at the expense of public school enrollment, which lost approximately 1 million students between 2019 and 2021 and is projected to lose another 2 million by 2030 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). The continuing decline in public school enrollment has a significant impact on the fiscal stability of school districts, which may be forced to close, consider closure, or repurpose underenrolled schools (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023).

The 2022–23 school year saw at least 66 Public schools in a South Florida school district operate at 50% to 70% of their intended capacity due to chronic under-enrollment, while Florida's homeschooling population grew by 71%, from 89,817 in 2017–18 to 154,289 in 2022–2023 (Florida Department of Education, 2024). Future enrollment declines and potential school closures are anticipated in the years to come (Johnson & Tanner, 2024). To encourage families to send their children to public schools, districts intend to redefine schools by offering more academic programs that appeal to them (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023). One option is to use underutilized school space with extremely low enrollment rates for a public homeschooling program (Miller & Davis, 2023).

The following sections describe the background and statement of the problem. Next, the study's purpose and significance are introduced, followed by the three research questions and a discussion of the theoretical framework. The definitions of terms used in this study, along with

the assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations, are provided next. A chapter summary concludes with the introduction of the study.

Background of the Problem

Families around the world had been educating their children at home for centuries (Gaither, 2021). In 1852, Massachusetts passed the first mandatory school attendance law, which was soon followed by other states (Shanan, 2023). Homeschooling was illegal in most states until 1993, when all 50 states legalized it (Hamlin & Peterson, 2022). The re-emergence of homeschooling is, in part, due to the families' dissatisfaction with the public school system, and in part, due to the tireless efforts of Raymond Moore and John Holt, strong advocates of homeschooling, who traveled the country to garner support from families, legislatures, and courts (Gaither, 2021). Homeschoolers increased significantly from 15,000 in the 1970s to 240,000 in the 1980s (Gaither, 2021). Homeschool enrollment jumped from 850,000 in 1999 to 1,457,000 in 2019, just before the pandemic, and 3 million in 2021, and is projected to grow to 5 million by 2030, while public school enrollment, which lost students to both homeschooling and private schools, declined from 50.8 million students in 2019 to 49.6 million in 2022, and is projected to drop to 47 million by 2030 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024).

Persistent enrollment declines resulted in public school revenue losses, and some are more severe than others (Malkus, 2022). Large districts, such as New York City, the largest school district in the U.S., are estimated to have a shortfall of \$1.1 billion, and Los Angeles Unified, the second-largest, is estimated to have a shortfall of \$0.68 billion from 2020 to 2022 (Malkus, 2022). The continued loss of revenue in districts across the country necessitated the closure or repurposing of underenrolled schools, which are mainly located in economically distressed or predominantly Black neighborhoods (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023). The closure of

schools primarily affects minority students and the communities where the schools are located (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The problem is the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire among homeschooling families in South Florida. With enrollment continuing to decline, more school closures may occur in the coming years unless school districts make changes (Workman, 2023). Schools in danger of closure are primarily located in low-income neighborhoods (Johnson & Tanner, 2024). Displaced students may experience difficulties adjusting to a new school environment and culture, which can negatively impact their academic performance, disengage them, and ultimately lead to their dropping out of school (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023). The communities of the closed schools also suffer economic harm because schools are typically one of the largest employers in those impoverished neighborhoods (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023).

Homeschooling enrollment in Florida has increased rapidly by over 70% since the 2017-18 school year (Florida Department of Education, 2024). Underenrolled districts in South Florida plan to redefine schools to offer more academic programs that appeal to families, encouraging them to send their children to public schools (Johnson & Tanner, 2024). One proposed strategy is to repurpose unused portions of severely under-enrolled schools to serve homeschoolers, funded by the Florida Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options, which provides up to \$8,000 per student annually (Florida Department of Education, 2023). The public homeschooling program can offer homeschoolers essential services, including customized curricula, activities, and support tailored to their individual preferences, abilities, learning styles, and other needs, while preserving students' autonomy, independence, flexible schedules, pacing, and interests

(Anderson & Amesse, 2022). With the additional income from the Florida Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options, which the state provides for servicing homeschoolers, and by utilizing the unused portions of severely under-enrolled schools, these schools can remain open instead of being closed, thereby benefiting students, families, and communities (Florida Department of Education, 2023). There is a lack of research on the needs and expectations of homeschooling families in South Florida.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida on why they choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire. This study focused on homeschooling families across multiple South Florida counties, representing diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The target audiences for this research include school district administrators, educational policymakers, homeschool support organizations, and community stakeholders involved in educational planning and resource allocation.

South Florida districts can receive state funding through the Florida Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options, providing homeschoolers with much-needed support while preserving their autonomy, independence, pacing, and interests (Florida Department of Education, 2023). With additional state funding to serve homeschoolers and to utilize the unused portions of severely under-enrolled schools, these schools could remain open rather than be closed, benefiting students, families, and communities while providing a much-needed program for homeschoolers (Florida Department of Education, 2023). The results of this study, which includes all the needs of homeschoolers in their pursuit of a holistic education, will be presented to South Florida school districts facing severe enrollment declines, with findings

intended to inform program development decisions and policy considerations for educational leaders and community organizations serving homeschooling populations.

Significance of the Study

Homeschooling has been a growing trend as an alternative to traditional public schools, especially during and after the pandemic (Watson, 2024). Homeschooling enrollment is projected to increase significantly through 2030, at the expense of public-school enrollment (Hamlin & Peterson, 2022; National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). The impact is especially profound in South Florida, home to the third-largest school district in the United States, which has lost 40,000 students over the last decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). Enrollment is projected to decline by another 9,000, primarily to homeschooling, in 2025–26, resulting in a loss of \$80 million in state funding (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). Studies suggest new generations of homeschoolers receive instruction at home, in learning pods, through virtual courses, microschools, and study groups (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023; Jesus, 2025). Homeschoolers also require services such as counseling, social-emotional support, participation in school clubs and sports, and guidance on college applications, among others (Contos & Tadros, 2022).

This study is significant in two ways. First, it explored what curriculum, activities, and services homeschoolers desired in a public homeschooling program offered by school districts in South Florida while preserving their autonomy, independence, pacing, and interests. With additional state funding to support the growing number of homeschoolers and to utilize the unused portions of severely under-enrolled schools, these schools could remain open rather than be closed, benefiting students, families, and communities while providing a much-needed program for homeschoolers. Second, there was a gap in the literature regarding a much-needed

program for homeschoolers that addresses curriculum, activities, counseling, and other essential needs. This basic qualitative study sought to fill this gap by exploring the limited understanding of why families chose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desired among homeschooling families in South Florida.

Research Questions

Public school enrollment is projected to decline by two million students between 2021 and 2030 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). To understand why schools experience high enrollment declines, why students choose to homeschool, and what curricula, activities, and services homeschoolers desire in a public homeschooling program that preserves their autonomy, independence, pacing, and interests, it was necessary to explore these needs. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding the factors influencing their decision to homeschool?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for curriculum in a homeschooling program?

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for program elements in a homeschooling program?

Theoretical Framework

Humanistic learning theory and ecological systems theory served as the theoretical frameworks guiding this study. Humanistic learning theory emphasizes learners' freedom, autonomy, motivation, and self-actualization, which are key factors in homeschooling (Mustofa, 2022). Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that necessities, such as safety, must be met before effective learning can occur (Mohamed & Nordin, 2025). Ecological systems theory explores the

interactions between different layers of the learning environment, including microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems, and focuses on how these environments influence learners' decisions and behaviors (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

By emphasizing each learner's distinct needs, autonomy, motivations, skills, interests, and goals, humanistic learning theory creates a learner-centered environment in which students take charge of and own their learning (Syafira et al., 2024). Humanistic learning theory posits that when learners are provided with their basic needs, autonomy, choice, and a safe and supportive learning environment, they are motivated to learn and develop (Mohamed & Nordin, 2025). Human ecological development encompasses a child's biological and psychological composition, as well as their interpersonal relationships with the surrounding environment, or ecological systems, as defined by Bronfenbrenner (2000).

When combined, humanistic learning theory and ecological systems theory provide a solid foundation for understanding why parents homeschool and what they are looking for in a program. Humanistic theory explains the intrinsic factors in student development, such as self-actualization, self-directed learning, and autonomy (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Ecological systems theory focuses on the extrinsic factors that influence the interactions between different layers of the learning environment, including microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems, and their impact on student development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Together, humanistic theory and ecological systems theory provide a personalized learning environment for students' holistic development.

Definitions of Terms

Definitions of uncommon but important terminologies are provided to enhance understanding of their use, meaning, concepts, discussions, and research study results (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Co-ops and learning pods is defined as learning environments that are even smaller than microschools, typically led by homeschooling parents to provide specialized or supplemental instruction for homeschoolers (Smarick, 2022).

COVID-19 pandemic is defined as the school years 2020–21 and 2021–22, during which the COVID-19 virus caused the closure of most schools in the United States, and most students attended classes remotely. (Valiente et al., 2022)

Cyberbullying is defined as aggressive and repeated actions carried out in digital platforms, such as social media, games, and messaging platforms, meant to hurt others intentionally. Homeschoolers face increased risks due to their higher frequency of online interactions and greater exposure to potential perpetrators (Bell & Fandrem, 2025).

Ecological systems theory is the study of the interactions among the different layers of the learning environment, including microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This theory focuses on how these environments influence learners' decisions and behaviors (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Florida Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options is defined as funding provided for education-related expenses for all K–12 children attending private schools or homeschooling, regardless of income (Florida Department of Education, 2023).

Homeschooling is defined as education directed by parents, with learning activities taking place in or outside the home. Learning at home that is directed by schools, such as virtual or

online learning, is not considered homeschooling because it is not directed by the parent (Valiente et al., 2022).

Homeschooling programs is defined as educational services, such as courses, counseling services, college guidance and advice, sports, and club activities, provided by public and charter schools, as well as private organizations, tailored to the needs of homeschoolers (Hirsh, 2019).

Humanistic learning theory is defined as a learner-centered environment in which students' basic needs are met, teachers act as facilitators, self-actualization, self-directed learning, and autonomy are valued, and students take responsibility for their learning (Maslow, 1958; Mustofa, 2022).

Microschool is a small learning environment featuring one or several classrooms and small class sizes, led by teachers who provide instruction tailored to homeschoolers' interests and needs (Smarick, 2022).

Assumptions

Assumptions are defined as commonly accepted, plausible, and assumed to be accurate hypotheses about concepts or views suitable for use in a study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). It is crucial to use assumptions grounded in experience and practical knowledge to support a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Credible worldview assumptions enable researchers to understand participants' complex perspectives in qualitative studies (Billups, 2021).

This research was based on the assumption that parents of homeschoolers, being their primary educational providers, were knowledgeable and able to answer the questionnaire, providing their perceptions and experiences of homeschooling, a crucial assumption for the results to be trustworthy. The projections from the Florida Department of Education, indicating that public school enrollment will continue to decline and homeschooling enrollment will

continue to rise rapidly, are assumed to be accurate (Florida Department of Education, 2024).

Another assumption was that Florida would continue to fund education-related expenses for homeschoolers, allowing additional funding for underutilized schools to provide programs for homeschoolers (Florida Department of Education, 2023).

Scope and Delimitations

Scope refers to the entirety of the study, encompassing discussions on the problem, purpose, and research questions, as well as data collection, analysis, and reporting; scope must not be too broad to be manageable (Yin, 2015). The scope of this study was to explore what is necessary for a public homeschooling program to meet the curriculum, activity, and service needs of homeschoolers in South Florida. South Florida is home to the third- and sixth-largest school districts in the U.S., as well as other smaller districts. Focusing on South Florida rather than the entire state or the country made this study manageable while still transferable to other regions.

Homeschooling programs must accommodate homeschoolers' preferences, abilities, learning styles, and other needs, all while preserving students' autonomy, independence, flexible schedules, pacing, and interests. The study involved 15 participants, parents of homeschooled students in South Florida, selected primarily through purposive sampling. If the full sample was not obtained through purposive sampling, snowball sampling was planned as a supplementary strategy, with current participants asked to refer other homeschooling parents who met the study's criteria.

Delimitation refers to the boundaries or parameters used in a study, including target locations, the population, sample size, and other study-related factors (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This study targeted families in South Florida with children enrolled in or planning to

enroll in homeschooling. While there are various concerns about homeschoolers, such as social pressure of criticism and disapproval from those who did not understand the homeschooling choice, greater risk of abuse because of extended time spent at home with no oversight, as well as minimum or no evidence required to show proof of academic progress, this study limits the research to explore what curriculum, activities, and services are needed by South Florida homeschoolers. Setting the scope and delimitations ensured that the study was narrow and focused, providing answers to the research questions.

Limitations

To minimize potential bias, it is essential to identify limitations in research studies to ensure validity and reliability (Mosbah, 2024). Describing potential limitations or weaknesses of a research study is crucial for readers to understand the results and for future studies to overcome these limitations, thereby avoiding the same problems. Limitations include factors beyond the study's control, as well as budget, time, sample size, and recruitment constraints (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

To avoid bias from personal experience in creating the data instrument, the questions were reviewed and revised by three subject matter experts (SMEs). Fifteen participants were recruited primarily through purposive sampling to ensure diversity. Purposive sampling in qualitative research enables small-sample studies to select participants or sites that are most informative for addressing the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). If initial recruitment through purposive sampling did not yield the target sample size, snowball sampling was planned, with current participants asked to refer other eligible individuals who met the inclusion criteria. This study is based on state funding for homeschoolers' educational expenses

and is applicable only to states with existing homeschooling programs or that fund homeschoolers.

Findings may be used by districts that want to keep their students from switching to homeschooling by meeting their needs. South Florida is home to two of the six largest districts in the U.S., and Florida has five of the 10 largest districts; the findings of this study may not be transferable to small districts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). To enhance transferability, this study employed an audit trail to document all research procedures and to provide thick descriptions of participants' responses and context, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to their specific situations (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Chapter Summary

Homeschool enrollment in the United States has experienced significant growth over the past decade, increasing from 3.4% in 2012 to 5.4% in 2021, with continued growth projected through 2030 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024; Watson, 2024). This increase comes at the direct expense of public school enrollment, which has lost approximately one million students and faces projections of losing another two million by 2030 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). The decline in public school enrollment creates fiscal stability challenges for school districts, particularly affecting schools in low-income communities that face potential closure or repurposing (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023). South Florida exemplifies this trend, with over 66 schools operating at 50–70% capacity while the state's homeschooling population grew by 71% between 2017–23 (Florida Department of Education, 2024).

The problem identified in this study centered on the limited understanding of why South Florida homeschooling families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire. School districts facing severe enrollment declines are exploring innovative

solutions, including repurposing underutilized school spaces for public homeschooling programs (Florida Department of Education, 2023). These programs could provide state-funded educational services while preserving the autonomy, independence, and flexible pacing that homeschooling families value (Anderson & Amesse, 2022). However, there existed a significant gap in research regarding the specific needs and expectations of homeschooling families in this region.

This basic qualitative study sought to explore homeschooling families' perceptions regarding factors influencing their educational decisions and their preferences for curriculum and program elements. The research was guided by humanistic learning theory, which emphasizes learner autonomy and self-actualization (Maslow, 1958; Mustofa, 2022), and ecological systems theory, which explores environmental influences on educational choices (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The study involved 15 participants selected through purposive sampling, with data collected through questionnaires and analyzed using thematic coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The theoretical framework supports understanding both intrinsic motivations for homeschooling and external environmental factors that influence these educational decisions.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive literature review that explores the theoretical frameworks in greater detail and explores existing research on homeschooling trends, support networks, and program development. The literature review identifies gaps in research and establishes the foundation for understanding homeschooling families' needs within public education frameworks. Chapter 2 concludes with a counterargument section and a chapter summary that synthesizes the reviewed literature and reinforces the study's significance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Public schools in South Florida have been experiencing declining enrollment. According to the Florida Department of Education (2024), during the 2022–23 academic year, at least 66 schools in one South Florida district operated at only 50% to 70% of their intended capacity. At the same time, homeschooling in Florida increased by 71% over 5 years, from 89,817 to 154,289 homeschoolers in 2022–23, reflecting a significant shift in parental educational preferences (Florida Department of Education, 2024). Most under-enrolled schools are located in low-income neighborhoods and are at risk of closure to help balance the district's budget (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023). This trend reflects a growing shift in parental preference for alternative education models, particularly homeschooling. Future enrollment declines and potential school closures are anticipated in the years to come (Johnson & Tanner, 2024). One option to ease school district budget deficits is to use underutilized school space with extremely low enrollment rates for a public homeschooling program (Miller & Davis, 2023).

The problem is the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire among homeschooling families in South Florida. With enrollment continuing to decline, there may be more school closures in the coming years unless the district makes changes (Johnson & Tanner, 2024). Most under-enrolled districts plan to "Redefine Schools" to offer more academic programs that appeal to families, encouraging them to send their children to public schools (Hahnel & Pearman, 2023). One proposed strategy is to repurpose unused portions of severely under-enrolled schools to serve homeschooling families; however, there is limited research on the needs and expectations of homeschooling families in South Florida.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida on why they choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire. This study sought to offer insights into how public school districts can develop programs within underutilized school facilities that better meet the needs of homeschooling families. Findings from this research may inform educational policy and program development, enabling districts to design initiatives that support homeschoolers while maximizing the utilization of existing school infrastructure.

Research indicates that two-thirds of homeschooled families use supplemental services (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023). Consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which highlights emotional and psychological well-being as prerequisites for academic growth, social and emotional learning (SEL) is positively correlated with student outcomes (de Bruijn et al., 2025). As Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasizes, microsystem interactions, such as homeschool co-ops, play a critical role in shaping children's social and emotional development through peer engagement (Valiente et al., 2022). From the perspective of ecological systems theory, co-ops represent key mesosystem structures that connect learners' home and peer environments, fostering academic and social development through collaboration (Zhang, 2024). These findings align with Maslow's humanistic learning theory, which emphasizes learner autonomy, self-direction, and the pursuit of self-actualization through personalized and flexible educational experiences (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021).

Bronfenbrenner's exosystem level, which represents external structures such as guidance and counseling, helps explain why access to college advising services is a critical component in supporting homeschool learners (Contos & Tadros, 2022). While existing studies address homeschooling motivations and learning outcomes, few explore how public school systems can

support homeschoolers through integrated programs or services (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021). No research exists in the literature on a program or curriculum that meets the needs of homeschoolers while ensuring compliance with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Literature lacks research on why families choose to homeschool and what curriculum, activities, and services homeschoolers desire in a homeschooling program.

This literature review explores trends, advantages, and disadvantages of homeschooling. Detailed is the literature search strategy, a theoretical framework on learning theories affecting homeschooling choices is presented, and a review of research on motivations, challenges, and needs. A counterargument section provides alternative perspectives on the topic. The chapter concludes with a summary and identifies gaps in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

The American College of Education Library's OneSearch tool served as the primary search engine for this study. OneSearch provided access to databases via OpenAthens and EBSCO, enabling discovery of the most relevant scholarly literature. The databases searched included ERIC, JSTOR, ProQuest, and SAGE. Additional search engines used were Google Scholar and Research Gate. Filters for the searches were set to peer-reviewed only and to 2022-2025. Seminal sources were used to support this study's theoretical framework and as a lens through which to view the literature. Government reports were primarily used for statistical purposes, to inform policies, and to establish laws.

Key search terms used to locate relevant articles, journals, and books included *advantages of homeschooling, challenges of homeschooling, curriculum preferences in homeschooling, disadvantages of homeschooling, ecological systems theory, homeschoolers' needs, homeschooling, homeschooling programs, homeschooling trends, humanist learning*

theory, hybrid learning models, learning pods, micro-schools, public funding of homeschooling, and social-emotional learning in homeschooling. Search terms were combined using Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT to narrow or expand the results. For example, searches combined homeschooling AND curriculum preferences or homeschooling OR hybrid learning models to yield more targeted sources. Inclusion criteria required sources to be peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, or scholarly books published within the last 5 years. Dissertations and websites were used sparingly to support areas with emerging research. Excluded materials included non-scholarly sources such as newspapers, magazines, blogs, outdated literature, and opinion-based articles.

This structured search strategy, utilizing peer-reviewed sources, targeted key terms, and relevant databases, ensured that the selected literature was aligned with the study's purpose. The absence of relevant results for search terms such as *homeschooling programs* highlighted a critical gap in the literature. There is a gap in the literature regarding a much-needed program for homeschoolers that addresses curriculum, activities, counseling, and other essential needs. This basic qualitative study sought to fill that gap by exploring the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire among homeschooling families in South Florida.

Theoretical Framework

Humanistic learning theory and ecological systems theory served as the theoretical frameworks guiding this research study, aligning with its problems, purpose, and design. Education's purpose extends beyond mere knowledge acquisition to nurturing students' growth towards self-actualization (Mustofa, 2022). Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs suggests that learners' necessities, such as safety, shelter, clothing, and food, preceding learning (Mohamed &

Nordin, 2025). Humanist learning theory emphasizes learners' freedom and autonomy rather than the learning methods or materials taught (Maslow, 1943). Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) focuses on how various layers of the environment influence individual decisions and behaviors. This framework explores interactions between microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems.

The theoretical framework aligned with the purpose of this study, which was to explore why families in South Florida choose homeschooling and what curriculum, activities, and services they desired. Humanistic learning theory supported this inquiry by framing how learner autonomy, motivation, and self-actualization influenced families' decisions to homeschool their children (Maslow, 1943). Ecological systems theory complements this by exploring the influence of environmental systems on homeschoolers' educational choices and developmental needs (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). Together, these two theories form the theoretical framework guiding this study, providing a conceptual foundation for understanding the individualized and context-dependent nature of homeschooling and informing the problem, purpose, and research questions (Syafira et al., 2024).

Humanist Learning Theory

The foundation of Maslow's theory is that the central phenomenon in the study of human behavior and learning is experience (Maslow, 1943). Human characteristics such as choice, creativity, values, and self-realization are valued, and subjectivity and meaningfulness are given greater weight than objectivity (Mohamed & Nordin, 2025). Maslow (1943) believed that the development of human potential, value, and dignity is the most critical factor. Humanistic learning theory emphasizes the learner's unique needs, motivations, abilities, and aspirations, fostering a learner-centered environment where learners take control and ownership of their

learning (Syafira et al., 2024). An underlying assumption of this theory is that individuals are inherently motivated to learn and grow, particularly when their basic needs are met, and they are provided with freedom, choice, and a supportive environment (Mohamed & Nordin, 2025). This theory posits that learners thrive when education addresses their holistic needs, cognitive, emotional, and social, and enables them to pursue their personal goals (Syafira et al., 2024).

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory suggests that a child's development is influenced by a complex system of relationships and a series of nested layers, comprising interconnected environmental systems, each contained within the next, in order of their significance in impacting a child (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). The systems range from the immediate surroundings, such as the child's family, to broader societal structures, including the culture (Lubis et al., 2024). Human ecological development encompasses a child's biological and psychological composition, as well as their interpersonal relationships with the surrounding environment, or Ecological Systems, as defined by Bronfenbrenner (2000).

Ecological systems theory has been applied in research exploring the broader influences on the educational experiences of homeschoolers. Valiente et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of microsystems such as parent-led co-ops and peer interactions in shaping children's social development. Allen et al. (2022) explored how adolescents' sense of belonging within their learning environments, whether traditional or non-traditional, significantly influenced their psychosocial adjustment. These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's proposition that interconnected environments, from home to cultural expectations, shape educational decisions and learner development (Crawford, 2020). In homeschooling, the flexibility to design these microsystems allows families to tailor support across all levels of the ecological model.

Connecting the Theories

When combined, humanistic learning theory and ecological systems theory provide a solid foundation for understanding why parents homeschool and what they are looking for in a program. Humanistic learning theory is based on learner autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and the pursuit of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Homeschooling aligns with these principles by allowing families to design learning experiences tailored to their child's interests, needs, and aspirations (Putri et al., 2024). Ecological systems theory is concerned with the impact of a student's development through the interplay among systems such as family, peer groups, neighborhood resources, and broader cultural values (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). These include the microsystem and mesosystem, particularly relevant to homeschooling, where education often occurs through co-ops, learning pods, and community experiences (Valiente et al., 2022; Zhang, 2024).

The integration of humanistic theory and ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive understanding of both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence homeschooling choices. Humanistic theory emphasizes the need for personalized and responsive education, while ecological systems theory shows how homeschoolers are enriched through peer contact, community support, and educational services (Syafira et al., 2024). These shared perceptions help answer the question of what curriculum, activities, and services South Florida homeschooling families seek from a program, such as one delivered via reallocated public school space. They offer an insight into how public school districts can structure programs that enhance the development, autonomy, and acceptance of homeschoolers within the broader community (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021; Contos & Tadros, 2022).

Research Literature Review

The rise of homeschooling across the United States, particularly in South Florida, reflects a significant shift in parental educational preferences driven by dissatisfaction with public schools, safety concerns, and the desire for personalized learning experiences (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023). As enrollment declines and public school infrastructure remains underutilized, districts are considering innovative strategies to repurpose facilities and re-engage families who have opted for homeschooling (National Home Education Research Institute, 2025). Despite these efforts, little is known about the motivations behind families' homeschooling decisions or the specific curricular, social, and support services they seek.

Research underscores the importance of learner autonomy and the influence of environmental factors on education, as framed by humanistic learning theory and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Maslow, 1943). However, the literature reveals critical gaps in understanding how public schools might meet the evolving needs of homeschoolers. This chapter synthesizes research on homeschooling trends, motivations, challenges, and support structures, while identifying opportunities for public education systems to better serve this growing population.

Trends in Homeschooling Enrollment

A significant movement away from public schooling was brought about by the epidemic, which disproportionately affected low-income and Black students who saw the most significant drops in public school attendance. In contrast, White and higher-income students declined less (Musaddiq et al., 2022). Homeschool enrollment had been increasing in the U.S. even before the pandemic. About 15,000 children were homeschooled in the early 1970s, surpassing two million by 2019 (Ray & Shakeel, 2023). Following the same trend and accelerated by the COVID-19

pandemic, homeschooling in Florida increased by more than 70% over 5 years, from 89,817 to 154,289 homeschoolers in 2022–23, reflecting a significant shift in parental educational preferences (National Home Education Research Institute, 2025). Homeschoolers prefer flexibility, personalization, and efficient time use by combining homeschooling with part-time virtual learning, cooperatives, and dual enrollment for college credits (Wang & Langager, 2023). The availability and wide selection of sophisticated online instructional material, micro-schools, and learning pods lessen the burdens and lower barriers that previously discouraged families from homeschooling (Hamlin & Peterson, 2022).

Alternative educational methods that successfully prepare students for democratic engagement must be considered by law. To fulfill the goals of universal public education, the law highlights that all students, especially those from underprivileged families, should have access to educational options to promote self-directed learning (Miller, 2022). Homeschooling is now legal in all 52 states (Hoffman, 2023). However, there is little regulation governing homeschooling and protecting homeschoolers from abuse, as most U.S. states lack a regulatory framework for homeschooling (Luck et al., 2025).

Motivations for Homeschooling

Studies suggest that most students choose homeschooling because they are dissatisfied with the public school system (Forlin et al., 2025). Those who transitioned to homeschool were more likely to have experienced racial discrimination, exclusion, or been bullied at school. Homeschoolers are more likely to be disabled than traditionally schooled students (Ludgate et al., 2022). Approximately 12% of families choose homeschooling due to their children's disabilities, to provide a healing and personalized learning environment for their children with special educational needs (Riley, 2023). About 21–22% of families homeschool primarily for

religious reasons (Nel & Krog, 2024). Most homeschoolers prefer a more personalized learning environment (Bosswell, 2021). Homeschooling is more prevalent in underperforming schools, mostly in low-income neighborhoods, suggesting a correlation between dissatisfaction and academic performance (Green-Hennessy & Mariotti, 2023).

Academic Considerations for Homeschooling Families

Self-directed learning, such as homeschooling, unschooling, and democratic schools, offers viable alternatives for improving academic outcomes because the public education system in the United States frequently falls short of its stated objectives (Eldeeb et al., 2024). According to studies, many children, especially those who are disenfranchised or suffer from psychological and social trauma due to traditional schooling, can benefit academically and socially from alternative educational approaches (Miller, 2022). Homeschool families can design a personalized curriculum to fit homeschoolers' needs and interests, boosting educational engagement and academic achievement (Anthony & Wildmon, 2023).

Research findings indicate that homeschoolers consistently perform better on standardized academic achievement tests, perform well in college, and even outperform their traditionally schooled peers on tests of social skills, leadership, and community involvement (Hoffman, 2023). Studies find that while structured homeschoolers with parental involvement and a structured learning environment outperformed public school peers in various subjects, with scores 15 to 30 percentile points higher, unstructured homeschoolers performed at or below grade level. Many parents believe that mandatory standardized tests harm students (Ross et al., 2023). They enroll their children in homeschooling to avoid taking those tests.

Homeschooling for Hispanic/Latina Families

Surveys indicated that over 60% of ethnic-minority homeschooling families identified as Hispanic (Fields-Smith, 2021). Preservation or reclamation of cultural and linguistic heritage and the lack of quality education are primary motivations for homeschooling among Hispanic/Latina families, who emphasize the importance of cultural values and bilingualism in shaping their educational choices. Homeschooling is viewed as strengthening family bonds by prioritizing time spent with family and instilling cultural values in children (Batts et al., 2024). Receiving instructions in their native language significantly motivates Hispanic families to homeschool (Fields-Smith, 2021).

Homeschooling for Black Families

Historically, Black families choose homeschooling because of the desire to flee educational inequalities, reaffirm cultural identity, and shield children from systematic racism (Baker, 2024). Racial discrimination, inadequate culturally relevant curriculum available in the public school system, and the necessity to safeguard children's self-esteem are the main reasons for Black families to homeschool (Ali-Coleman & Fields-Smith, 2022). Black students are especially susceptible to certain damages resulting from racial prejudice in the educational setting; harms that compromise their freedom to develop to be themselves fully (Williams-Johnson, 2022).

Faith is also a significant factor for many Black families to homeschool, intertwining religious beliefs with the pursuit of educational equity and cultural relevance (Baker, 2024). Parents of Black students have turned to homeschooling to ensure their children receive an adequate education, safety, and emotional well-being (Williams-Johnson & Fields-Smith, 2022). Black parents choose alternatives to public schools to provide a more supportive and culturally

relevant learning environment (Howard & Baker, 2024). The expansion of community support networks, including churches and community organizations, plays a significant role in fueling homeschooling among Black families (Baker, 2024).

Homeschooling for Gifted Children

Research indicates that homeschooling enables immediate responses to gifted children's academic needs, leading to higher satisfaction among families who often decide to homeschool after unsatisfactory experiences in traditional schools, particularly regarding curriculum and acceleration options (Matthews et al., 2024). Families with gifted children often choose homeschooling to heal from a school system that has harmed their children's emotional and cognitive development; they appreciate the freedom and flexibility homeschooling offers in fostering their talents and interests (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021).

Some parents of gifted children often feel frustrated with the lack of academic challenge and rigor in traditional education provided in formal school settings; they choose homeschooling to provide educational autonomy and advanced instruction for their gifted children (Connolly-Spring et al., 2024). A study by Fincher and Zhbanova (2023) found Black students are underrepresented among those identified as gifted and talented in public schools. This lack of identification and participation, along with the unavailability of gifted programs in public schools, encourages families of gifted Black students to homeschool their children (Fincher & Zhbanova, 2023).

Social and Emotional Factors in Homeschooling

The critique of homeschooling centers on the belief that it isolates children from mainstream society, deprives them of essential social skills and experiences found in traditional schools, and potentially hinders their social development, academic achievement, and life

outcomes (Unger Madar & BenDavid-Hadar, 2022). However, some empirical studies suggest that formerly homeschooled adults did not experience social isolation, socioemotional difficulties, or adverse outcomes during their homeschooling years, primarily because parents intentionally facilitated social opportunities (Hamlin & Cheng, 2022). Findings indicated that homeschooling allows for flexible application of character values, enhancing children's empathy, responsibility, and social skills (Ayu & Lestari, 2024).

A study by Unger Madar and BenDavid-Hadar (2022) found that children with emotional or learning difficulties may benefit from homeschooling, and compared to their peers in traditional schools, homeschooled children exhibited higher levels of creative thinking and social competencies, which are essential for children to interact and collaborate in various environments effectively. The approach to socialization in homeschooling can differ significantly from traditional schooling. Socialization is a critical concern for homeschooling families, with parents actively seeking opportunities for their children to interact with peers, such as through extracurricular activities and community involvement, and engage in diverse social experiences tailored to their children's interests (Naidaitė & Stasiunaitienė, 2024).

Social stigma negatively impacts homeschooled students, leading to misjudgments about their social skills and the perception that homeschooling isolates children, but research shows they have ample socialization opportunities (Avila & Molino, 2024). While homeschooled children and families might not have access to various counseling options, children in public and private schools do. Counselors can play a vital role in supporting homeschooling families by providing resources, addressing social-emotional and mental health needs, and facilitating transitions (Contos & Tadros, 2022).

Homeschoolers' Bullying Concerns

Bullying is a significant issue in American schools, with 20.2% of students ages 12-18 reporting being bullied in 2016-17 (Izadi & Hart, 2023). Bullying is defined as unwanted aggressive behavior with a power imbalance, occurring repeatedly (Peters, 2021). There are various forms of bullying, including physical attack, verbal abuse, social isolation, and online harassment (Zhang, 2024). Bullying increases psychological pressure, leading to anxiety and a decline in self-worth. Victims often struggle to concentrate, decreasing academic performance (Madsen et al., 2024). Prolonged bullying can severely damage self-worth and lead to low self-esteem. Victims often experience social isolation, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and rejection (Zhang, 2024). Studies show a significant link between loneliness and bullying victimization, which is prevalent among adolescents at school, and is associated with adverse psychological outcomes (Madsen et al., 2024). School bullying significantly impacts children's physical and mental health, as well as academic achievement, requiring effective prevention and intervention strategies (Zhang, 2024). Some parents homeschool to escape bullying at school (Green-Hennessy & Mariotti, 2023; Miller, 2022; Peters, 2021).

There is a strong association between bullying and poor life satisfaction, mental health issues, and suicidal behavior (Madsen et al., 2024). Homeschooling promotes strong character development and allows for the flexible building of character values, empathy, responsibility, and social skills in children. These factors enhance emotional well-being and prevent bullying (Ayu & Lestari, 2024). Active parental involvement in character education is key to shaping homeschooled children's character and preventing bullying (Unger Madar & BenDavid-Hadar, 2022). Parents play a crucial role in developing children's social-emotional aspects through affection and support, personalized learning, and improving children's focus and responsiveness

(Ayu & Lestari, 2024). They should educate children about bullying and monitor their mental and physical health (Zhang, 2024). Effective character building and bullying prevention require parents to have support through training and resources to provide homeschoolers with a structured curriculum grounded in character values that can improve bullying prevention efforts (Ayu & Lestari, 2024).

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying, while less prevalent than traditional bullying, is linked to feelings of loneliness among adolescents (Madsen et al., 2024). Increased popularity of digital technologies, smartphone use, and online interactions significantly impacts children, making them vulnerable to online risks and contributing to the rise of cyberbullying (Choi et al., 2022). Homeschooled children are frequently subjected to cyberbullying (Avila & Molino, 2024). According to Bell and Fandrem (2025), cyberbullying involves repeated, aggressive online behavior meant to harm others intentionally. Children have increased online interactions due to homeschooling, which raises the risk. This growing exposure puts them in more frequent contact with potential perpetrators.

There is a strong association between cyberbullying and poor life satisfaction, mental health issues, and suicidal behavior. Studies show varying associations between cyberbullying and loneliness, with some suggesting loneliness may precede cyberbullying (Madsen et al., 2024). Some states have adopted laws to protect children from the harm of cyberbullying (Dills, 2022). To effectively reduce cyberbullying, a holistic approach involving all adults to create a safe environment for children is essential (Bell & Fandrem, 2025).

Homeschooling Fosters Family Bonding

Most homeschool parents disenroll their children from public schools because of developmental concerns and negative social interactions. They believe school environments could lead to negative social behaviors among children (Ahi & Sengil-Akar, 2021). Some parents blame the adverse social behavior on negative peer influence and pressure (Lois, 2021). Parents prefer homeschooling their children to have increased family time, relaxed routines, improved relationships, and other unexpected positives, such as gaining insights into their children's needs and the potential for creative learning practices (Ludgate). For parents who have an intense love for their children, homeschooling can increase family unity. They take on full educational responsibilities because they believe schools are inept to teach their children, especially those families who have children with special needs or are gifted (Lois, 2021).

Homeschooling Motivated by Cultural and Religious Factors

Parents of homeschoolers often cite faith-based or religious practices within the family as the main reasons for homeschooling. They disagree with the curriculum taught at public schools, which mainly concerns religion or science, such as evolution and sexual education. They also list building a family religious bond as important, and homeschooling provides them with the time to influence their children's faith by incorporating materials about God and the Bible (Bodah, 2022). Palma (2024) suggested that multi-role homeschooling parents can provide a well-rounded, faith-based education by enlisting support from the local religious community, religious-themed microschools, or learning pods.

Homeschooling Support Networks

Homeschooling families often rely on informal support systems, including social networks, community resources, and co-ops. These networks provide essential resources and

emotional support (Contos & Tadros, 2022). A survey by Jesus (2025) found that homeschooling parents face significant challenges, including their multiple roles as educators, caregivers, and emotional supporters. To balance these responsibilities with limited access to teaching resources, they need external support systems, such as training programs, resource-sharing platforms, and community networks, to effectively empower them to homeschool their children (Jesus, 2025). Support networks, such as home-education groups, are crucial for families homeschooling children, especially those with disabilities, special needs, or giftedness. Support networks, external resources, and partnerships are vital for effective home-schooling in remote areas (Forlin et al., 2025).

Libraries and museums have also begun offering resources and programs tailored for homeschoolers (Contos & Tadros, 2022). In homeschooling, the physical characteristics of the learning pod or micro school play a crucial role in influencing student behavior and creating a safe learning environment, where smaller groups and physical space enhance student interactions and community sense (Izadi & Hart, 2023). Advanced digital and communications technology enables homeschoolers to transition from in-school direct instruction toward facilitating collaborative pods (George & Siranchuk, 2025).

Co-ops

Co-ops are learning arrangements in which homeschooling parents share teaching with one another or with experts in a particular field. Co-ops help families by allowing parents with expertise in a particular field to teach specific subjects; they also provide homeschoolers with opportunities to interact with peers and other adults. While older children could use co-ops to acquire experience working in groups and learn about subjects from other parents with

knowledge different from their own, parents of younger children might join co-ops to obtain assistance and socializing opportunities for their children (Valiente et al., 2022).

A study by Gatewood et al. (2022) posited that some Black homeschooling families form co-ops to foster a culturally appropriate educational environment that empowers them to educate their children in line with their aspirations and values. This includes project-based, hands-on, and real-world learning supported by a customized curriculum, extracurricular, and enrichment activities. Some parents homeschool so they have control over their children's education. They join co-ops to provide the children with a personalized learning environment and curriculum (Bodah, 2022).

Learning Pods

To share responsibility for their children's education, many families set up learning pods (Kim et al., 2022). Equity must be guaranteed in the creation of learning pods. To ensure that learning pods are efficient and fair, organizers play a critical role in educating homeschoolers and guarantee that all students benefit, especially those who are disadvantaged. Promoting fair access to educational resources is a critical function of organizers. By providing safe physical spaces, learning pod hosts guarantee that students can access the necessary resources, including devices and Wi-Fi. Community centers, libraries, churches, residences, and city-owned structures are examples of hosts. Students in learning pods are supervised by facilitators, who include teachers, tutors, and volunteers, many of whom have educational experience (Kim et al., 2022). Homeschoolers, even the most independent, thrive with the community's support while homeschooling (Bodah, 2022).

Micro-schools

Micro-schools, typically small learning environments with a low student-to-teacher ratio and flexible curricula, have expanded rapidly to provide much-needed services to the nearly 2 million students who left district-run public schools during the pandemic. Homeschooling has experienced significant enrollment growth even after the pandemic, while micro-schools have expanded to over 250 schools across 31 states, some offering tuition-free options and others paid for by state education savings account programs (Hamlin, 2024). Homeschoolers in micro-schools have the freedom to pursue their personal goals and interests, which may not always align with standardized testing. In addition, many of them attend micro-schools because they are academically behind and are not ready for full-time, self-directed learning; they require more hands-on support and direct instruction from educators (Hamlin, 2024).

Online Communities for Homeschoolers

The growing accessibility of online platforms has enabled homeschooling families to build and maintain virtual communities that offer academic resources, social connections, and emotional support (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023). Online homeschooling communities serve as hubs for information exchange, collaboration, and shared learning experiences among families who may otherwise feel isolated (Delia, 2023). These platforms include Facebook groups, forums, learning management systems, and video conferencing tools that allow parents to discuss curriculum, coordinate virtual co-ops, and access expert-led sessions (George & Siranchuk, 2025).

Digital networks play a critical role in sustaining a sense of belonging for both parents and students (Jesus, 2025). These communities not only offer curriculum guidance and pedagogical strategies but also facilitate cultural exchanges, enrichment activities, and faith-

based learning opportunities. As more families choose homeschooling, especially in under-resourced or geographically isolated regions, digital tools have enabled participation in robust support systems that previously depended on physical proximity (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023). The flexibility and reach of online communities mitigate many logistical barriers, enabling the continuation of socialization and academic growth consistent with Bronfenbrenner's concept of mesosystem interaction.

Online homeschooling groups also empower parents by enhancing their confidence and competence as home educators. Research shows that access to community-generated resources and peer mentoring significantly improves parental self-efficacy (Jesus, 2025). These platforms facilitate resource sharing, instructional feedback, and access to webinars or training workshops, helping parents overcome instructional challenges while navigating multiple roles (Delia, 2023). Online communities enhance the educational experience by fostering collaboration, bridging resource gaps, and supporting learner autonomy and motivation aligned with humanistic learning theory (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023).

Cultural Preservation and Value-Based Education

Homeschooling focuses on family bonds and personalized education (Qureshi & Ali, 2022). For many families, homeschooling is not solely an alternative to traditional schooling but a conscious effort to preserve cultural heritage and instill specific values that may be underrepresented in public education. Cultural preservation involves maintaining language, traditions, and historical narratives that align with a family's ethnic identity, while value-based education emphasizes moral instruction rooted in religious, philosophical, or familial beliefs.

Hispanic/Latina families, for instance, frequently cite bilingual instruction, cultural transmission, and religious formation as central motivations for homeschooling (Batts et al.,

2024; Fields-Smith, 2021). Homeschooling enables them to integrate cultural stories, language instruction, and values such as *respeto* (respect) and *familismo* (family-centeredness) directly into the learning experience. Similarly, Black families often homeschool to provide their children with culturally affirming curricula that counteract institutional racism and Eurocentric perspectives prevalent in public school systems (Ali-Coleman & Fields-Smith, 2022; Baker, 2024). These families seek to empower their children through curricula that reflect their history, contributions, and cultural worldview.

Faith-based homeschooling communities extend this concept by integrating spiritual instruction into everyday learning. Many Christian homeschooling families reject elements of the public school curriculum, such as evolution or sex education, in favor of teachings aligned with Biblical principles (Bodah, 2022; Nel & Krog, 2024). Value-based education provides a framework for moral development, character building, and spiritual growth, prioritizing these over standardized academic outcomes. As Palma (2024) noted, the collaboration between families and local religious organizations enhances the effectiveness of faith-based homeschooling by supplementing instruction with community-based support.

In both cultural and religious contexts, humanistic learning theory supports these decisions by emphasizing self-directed learning, personal meaning, and alignment with individual beliefs (Maslow, 1943; Putri et al., 2024). Ecological systems theory further explains how macrosystem influences, such as culture and religion, shape educational decisions, leading families to design learning environments that reflect their core values and long-term aspirations (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Lubis et al., 2024). These theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of how homeschooling enables parents to cultivate personalized,

value-centered educational models rooted in their cultural, spiritual, and community identities (Syafira et al., 2024).

Desired Public School Resources for Homeschoolers

Homeschooling families often retain interest in select public school services that enhance enrichment, college readiness, and social engagement (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023). While families choose homeschooling for its flexibility and autonomy, many are willing to participate in public school programs that supplement their efforts without compromising educational control (Wang & Langager, 2023). Districts that repurpose underutilized school space to meet these needs may attract families back into cooperative relationships with public education (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023).

Specialized Courses (STEM, AP, Arts)

Access to advanced or specialized coursework, such as AP classes, laboratory-based science, robotics, and the arts, is a common desire among homeschooling families (Jesus, 2025). These subjects often require equipment, trained professionals, or collaborative environments that are not easily recreated at home (Wang & Langager, 2023). Dual enrollment programs, hybrid options, and part-time participation allow homeschoolers to engage in these offerings while maintaining autonomy (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023).

Extracurricular Activities (Sports, Music, Clubs)

Participation in extracurricular activities remains a high priority for many homeschooling families. According to Cheng and Hamlin (2023), over 66% of homeschoolers engage with supplemental services such as sports teams, debate clubs, or music ensembles offered by public schools. These opportunities support holistic child development and enhance social-emotional skills aligned with Maslow's humanistic learning theory (de Bruijn et al., 2025).

College and Career Counseling Services

A significant gap for many homeschoolers is access to structured college and career guidance. Contos and Tadros (2022) found homeschooled families often feel underprepared for postsecondary planning, including college admissions, financial aid, and application strategies. Establishing college and career advising hubs within public schools could fill this gap and support transitions to higher education while remaining inclusive of homeschooling needs (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021).

Although homeschoolers often value autonomy, many welcome access to targeted public school resources when those resources align with their values and priorities. Collaborative programs that provide academic rigor, enrichment, and counseling, without compromising philosophical independence, are increasingly embraced by homeschool families (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023; Wang & Langager, 2023). School districts that recognize and respond to these needs may improve educational equity and maximize the use of public school infrastructure (Delia, 2023).

Public Homeschooling Program in California

Independent Study Chartered Schools in California offer non-classroom-based personalized programs for homeschoolers. Funded by public money, they have been providing a formalized education structure to homeschooling families for over three decades. Parents decide which curricula and pedagogical approaches to use for their children's learning at home, while school staff provides support and guidance. Most families choose traditional education, about 10% opt for project- or unit-based learning, primarily in STEM fields, and about 5% of students practice unschooling with no formal curriculum (Anderson & Ames, 2022). Senate Bill 277, effective July 1, 2016, legalized independent study charter schools to enroll students who have

waived their personal exemptions from vaccination, further fueling their enrollment. Independent study charter school enrollment accounted for 20% of all chartered school enrollment in 2017, representing a 100% increase from 2010. The projected share of independent study charter school enrollment is expected to be 30% by 2025 (Anderson & Ames, 2022).

Public Homeschooling Program in Alaska

Homeschoolers in Alaska are eligible to receive state funding for educational services and materials through correspondence schools or correspondence programs, which have existed since 1930. The correspondence programs were revised in the 1990s to better align with homeschoolers' needs. Parents teach their children at home using a personalized curriculum tailored to their children's interests and abilities (Coleman & McCracken, 2020). Jack and Debra Phelps, along with the Alaska Private and Home Educators Association (APHEA), work closely with the Alaska legislature to ensure the state has the best homeschool laws in the country.

Alaska K–12 homeschoolers educated at home by their parents are exempt from the compulsory attendance law, annual assessments, subject-matter requirements, the requirement for days or hours of learning, and any other regulation (Boden & Boden, 2024). A statistical analysis of Alaska state standardized test results, performed by Coleman and McCracken (2020), shows that underprivileged, students with disabilities, and minority students in correspondence programs perform better in reading and writing but slightly lower in math than their peers in public schools.

Homeschooling Parental Involvement

Many factors influence parents to homeschool their children, most importantly, the belief that public schools are inadequate to educate their children, safety concerns, and the desire for more family time and improved relationships (Lois, 2021; Palma, 2024). Homeschooling parents

often act as teachers, caregivers, and emotional supporters, and some may need to balance a full-time or part-time job (Jesus, 2025). Parents are responsible for designing a personalized curriculum, schedule, and overall goals that fit the needs and unique interests of homeschoolers (Anthony & Wildmon, 2023).

Parents often create opportunities for homeschoolers to socialize with their peers, such as through extracurricular activities and community service, and engage in diverse social experiences tailored to their interests, thereby promoting children's social and emotional well-being (Naidaitė & Stasiunaitienė, 2024). To effectively homeschool their children based on their interests, homeschool parents, who often have limited access to teaching resources, utilize culturally relevant external support systems, such as online instruction, co-ops, microschools, resource-sharing platforms, and community networks (Jesus, 2025). Studies show that homeschoolers with a structured learning environment and parental involvement outperformed public school peers in most subjects, scoring 15-30% higher (Hamlin & Cheng, 2022).

Public-Private Partnerships in Homeschool Support Programs

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become a strategic approach to enhancing educational offerings while optimizing resource utilization, as public school districts seek innovative methods to engage homeschooling families (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023). To provide additional educational programs tailored to the needs of homeschoolers, PPPs involve partnerships between public school systems and private entities, including corporations, nonprofits, and community organizations, to complement parent-led instruction at home (Hamlin, 2024). Public-private partnerships offer homeschooling families access to specialized resources that may be challenging to replicate on their own, including STEM labs, art programs, online instruction, dual enrollment, part-time enrollment at a brick-and-mortar public or charter

school, and extracurricular activities (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023). Studies show increased academic outcomes and improved educational equity can be achieved when public schools partner with local businesses to provide publicly funded programs for homeschoolers in underutilized school facilities serving underprivileged students, often in low-income neighborhoods and at risk of closure (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2022).

Public-private partnerships offer homeschoolers access to community resources, including libraries, museums, and parks. Libraries provide space and online support through access to databases, library-made videos for homeschoolers, and social media support groups. Partnering with local public and charter schools provides homeschoolers with state-funded part-time classes, extracurricular activities, college and career counseling, and referrals to public social service agencies, as well as social-emotional support, evaluations, IEP development, and counseling by a school psychologist. Partnering with local colleges, workforce development agencies, and private organizations can provide homeschoolers with internships, dual enrollment, and structured pathways to postsecondary education and vocational training (Contos & Tadros, 2022).

The PPP model aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory by strengthening mesosystem connections, linking home education with community-based resources to support holistic child development (Lubis et al., 2024). Public-private partnerships support families' desires for autonomy while ensuring that students receive comprehensive preparation for future academic and career endeavors (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021). From a humanistic learning theory perspective, PPPs enhance learner autonomy by offering flexible, interest-driven programs that support self-actualization (Maslow, 1943; Syafira et al., 2024). By providing choice and diversity in educational experiences, the partnerships empower families to tailor their

learning to their needs while benefiting from community resources. Public-private partnerships foster a sense of belonging and community engagement, mitigating concerns about social isolation often associated with homeschooling (Hamlin & Cheng, 2022).

Successful implementation of PPPs requires careful attention to governance, equitable access, and alignment with homeschoolers' values and expectations. Transparent agreements that respect parental autonomy, cultural diversity, and pedagogical preferences are critical for fostering trust and participation (Jesus, 2025). As public schools face declining enrollment and seek to maximize facility use, PPPs offer a pragmatic, mutually beneficial approach to supporting homeschooling families while revitalizing public education spaces (Jamison et al., 2024).

Benefits of Homeschooling

Wolf et al. (2023) emphasized that greater educational freedom is associated with significantly higher NAEP achievement levels and student outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged students. A survey by Gray and Riley (2013) found homeschoolers exhibit increased motivation, enthusiasm, and engagement in their learning experiences, leading to improved learning, better approaches to learning, and better mental health. They are learning more efficiently and enthusiastically, with a high level of curiosity, and are exposed to more real-world experience than their public school peers. Homeschoolers have a social advantage because they have more time for family life and socializing with people of different ages and experiences. They are happier, more socially engaged, more confident, and less stressed (Gray & Riley, 2013).

Homeschooling improves academic outcomes by providing students with more opportunities to discover their passions and talents, apply knowledge, and solve real-world

problems. Homeschoolers can choose their schedules, preferred subjects, and teachers without peer pressure or the burden of standardized testing. A customized curriculum that aligns with homeschoolers' interests, learning styles, and needs fosters an engaging, purposeful learning environment and enhances critical thinking and creativity (Qureshi & Ali, 2022).

Challenges and Barriers to Homeschooling

Homeschooling families encounter unique challenges, including stigma, role strain, and the need for support in addressing special needs (Contos & Tadros, 2022). They must also overcome the social pressure of criticism and disapproval from those who did not understand their homeschooling choice. Some face practical issues related to the time required, career prospects, family finances, and the difficulty of arranging social opportunities for their children (Gray & Riley, 2013). Families with special needs homeschoolers or who reside in remote areas may struggle to find support networks and community resources, which are crucial for effective homeschooling (Forlin et al., 2025). Many Black homeschooling families have difficulty finding culturally appropriate resources and homeschooling support organizations, and connecting with their same-race homeschool peers (Mazama & Musumunu, 2015).

Some parents struggle with accessing curriculum materials to accommodate their children's unique interests and goals while balancing work and homeschooling their children. Homeschoolers must also separate and balance home life and schooling without getting distracted (Bodah, 2022). Homeschoolers commonly use digital technologies to access specific curriculum materials and to collaborate with other learners. However, some homeschoolers and parents may face challenges accessing and using digital technologies (Morris & Pannone, 2024).

Critics of homeschooling are concerned that, without much, if any, government oversight, homeschoolers are subjected to a greater risk of maltreatment and abuse. Legislative

actions, laws, and regulations must be initiated to protect homeschoolers' safety. Requiring background checks and more home visits may not significantly reduce abuse. However, they are proposed as a practical first step. Others suggest striking a balance between parental educational rights and regulations for homeschooler safety (Dills, 2022).

Research Topic Counterargument

Greenwalt (2021) raised concerns about the lack of oversight in homeschooling, including potential negative impacts on children's education and socialization, unchecked parental authority, and the risk of isolation and abuse. These issues are compounded by inadequate regulatory frameworks and the possibility that improper curricula and materials may be used. In response to such concerns, Brown (2025) argued for balanced state-level regulations that protect homeschooled children while still respecting parents' rights and autonomy in educating their children. While debates surrounding homeschooling often focus on academic outcomes, child welfare, and socialization, most academic studies produce mixed results. Research indicates positive outcomes for homeschooled children and suggests homeschooling does not significantly impact student achievement, with some advantages in verbal skills (Cheng & Hamlin, 2023). Homeschoolers perform well academically in college but are 23% less likely than their public school peers to attend (Brown, 2025).

Chapter Summary

Homeschooling enrollment increased before the pandemic and continued to grow afterward (Hoffman, 2023; Musaddiq et al., 2022). There is a gap in the literature to study homeschoolers' curriculum and program needs. The study is grounded in humanistic learning theory and ecological systems theory, which emphasize learner autonomy and the influence of environmental systems on educational choices. Dissatisfaction with public schools (Forlin et al.,

2025), cultural preservation, demographic factors such as race (Baker, 2024), religious factors (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021), children with disabilities (Riley, 2023), and the desire for personalized education motivate homeschooling. Homeschoolers consistently perform better on standardized academic achievement tests. Some parents of gifted children often feel frustrated with public schools' lack of academic challenge and rigor and choose homeschooling to provide educational autonomy and advanced instruction for their gifted children (Connolly-Sporing et al., 2024).

Concerns about socialization in homeschooling are addressed through co-ops, learning pods, micro-schools, and community involvement that provide essential social interactions and academic support for homeschooled children. Homeschooling families face challenges such as balancing multiple roles and accessing resources. Support networks and community resources are crucial for effective homeschooling, especially for families with special needs or in remote areas (Forlin et al., 2025). Access to counseling services, including college and career guidance, curriculum support, and social and emotional well-being, is essential for the holistic development of homeschoolers. It was crucial to explore the lived experiences and decision-making processes of homeschooling families from their perspectives. A basic qualitative research methodology, as detailed in Chapter 3, describes the framework, along with participant recruitment, data collection instruments, preparation and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations that ensured credibility and confidentiality.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Homeschooling enrollment in Florida has surged by 71% since 2017, rising from 89,817 to 154,289 homeschoolers as of 2023 (Florida Department of Education, 2024). This significant increase, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to declining enrollment in many public schools, particularly in South Florida. Families increasingly opt for homeschooling due to concerns about safety, academic flexibility, and alignment with personal values (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). However, there is limited understanding of the specific factors driving these decisions and the curriculum and program elements homeschooling families prioritize (Pak et al., 2020). This gap was particularly impactful in South Florida, where districts struggled to meet the needs of diverse educational communities.

The problem is the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire among homeschooling families in South Florida. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida on why they choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire. The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding the factors influencing their decision to homeschool?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for curriculum in a homeschooling program?

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for program elements in a homeschooling program?

This chapter details the qualitative research methodology, including the rationale for selecting a basic qualitative design and its alignment with the study's purpose. The role of the researcher is discussed, with a focus on reflexivity, ethical considerations, and strategies to minimize bias. Remaining sections outline the research procedures, including population and sample selection, recruitment methods, data collection instruments, and the step-by-step process for data analysis, ensuring a thorough approach to addressing the research questions.

Research Methodology, Design, and Rationale

Qualitative research originated in the exploration, understanding, and evaluation of anthropology and sociology (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Qualitative research focuses on gathering and exploring how individuals develop, interpret, or make sense of experience, idea, or comprehension (Bhangu et al., 2023). The qualitative research method is used to collect data about a target population to explore their experiences and perceptions (Taherdoost, 2022). By focusing on non-numerical data, qualitative research enables the exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences, making it well-suited for studies like this one, which explored the factors influencing homeschooling families in South Florida. This basic qualitative research study used an online questionnaire to collect data on South Florida homeschool families' perceptions of homeschooling programs and their needs. This design allowed flexibility and depth, offering insights into families' decisions and preferences while aligning with the study's purpose and research questions.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research methods are used to collect and analyze non-numeric data to gain insights and knowledge of people's perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2024). These methods are particularly suited for exploring subjective experiences and uncovering deeper

meanings, making them ideal for studies focused on understanding participants' thoughts, feelings, and preferences (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Qualitative instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, documents, visual-audio data, and focus group discussions are used to explore participants' experiences, meanings, emotions, and thoughts (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Qualitative research studies are used to answer questions concerning perceptions, experiences, ideas, and meanings. The process focuses on inquiry and interpretation more than the end products (Mulisa, 2022a). Such studies prioritize flexibility and adaptability to fully explore emerging themes and insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Basic Design

There are several approaches to qualitative research studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2022); a basic qualitative research study design was best aligned with the problem and purpose of this study and best suited to answer the research questions. This design allowed for an open-ended exploration of participants' perspectives without the constraints of a more narrowly focused approach, such as phenomenology or case study. Basic qualitative research enables researchers to explore varied perspectives and experiences through flexible data-collection methods, making it particularly valuable for understanding diverse viewpoints on educational practices and preferences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The flexibility of a basic qualitative research design allows an open-ended questionnaire, which enables access to a broader pool of participants and facilitates the collection of diverse perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Responses to the online questionnaire directly address the research questions, offering rich, detailed insights into homeschoolers' families' perceptions of their reasons for homeschooling, their educational programs, and their social needs. This

efficiency is especially valuable in studies with practical implications, such as informing educational policies or program development for homeschooling families in South Florida.

Role of the Researcher

Reflexivity, or self-reflection, is a fundamental characteristic of qualitative research, an approach that includes the researcher's comments on their role and the qualitative strategy being used (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Researchers must disclose any conflicts with the research site and participants that could affect the interpretation and analysis of data. The researcher's role in this study was to locate one or more sites where participants were recruited to represent the target population. The target population of this study was the homeschooling families of South Florida. Three social media groups with over 5,000 members serving South Florida homeschooling families were sent site permission requests to recruit participants for this study, which required 15 participants to reach saturation.

Maintaining independence from the site and participants was crucial to avoid influencing the interpretation of response data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The researcher had no role in the social media groups where permissions were sought, other than being a new member with the sole purpose of contacting the group administrators. There were no relationships with potential participants who voluntarily filled out an online questionnaire. Personal or professional relationships between the researcher and participants did not exist to ensure that there was no inherent power dynamic, such as being a teacher or supervisor, that could influence participants' responses.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed to avoid conflicts of interest or dual roles, as the study was not conducted within the work environment and no incentives were offered to participants. Participants were informed of their voluntary participation, ensuring

transparency and autonomy throughout the informed consent process. Creswell and Creswell (2022) identified several strategies to manage potential biases and ensure objective data analysis in qualitative research. These strategies include bracketing to identify and set aside personal assumptions during data interpretation, maintaining a clear audit trail to systematically document the research process, validating findings through member checking with participants, and providing rich, thick descriptions to enhance transferability.

This study implemented these recommended strategies to minimize bias and ensure the credibility of the findings. Personal assumptions were documented through reflective journaling before and during data collection to support bracketing efforts. Detailed records of the research process were maintained, including recruitment efforts, data collection procedures, coding decisions, and analytical memos. Interpretations and preliminary findings were shared with participants for verification, providing them the opportunity to confirm or clarify their responses through member checking. Multiple data sources, including questionnaire responses and demographic information, were triangulated to identify themes. Rich descriptive data are presented in the findings to enhance the study's transferability to similar contexts. Such measures ensure that the data and conclusions remain credible and trustworthy.

Research Procedures

Researchers must adhere to research procedures and document the process to provide an audit trail and enable others to generalize or replicate (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This basic qualitative research explored why South Florida families homeschool their children and what curriculum, activities, and services homeschoolers desire in a homeschooling program. The research procedures for this study were to identify the target population, determine the sample size, identify potential research sites, send site permission requests, create an open-ended

questionnaire, field-test research instruments by three or more SMEs, and apply for IRB. After receiving site and IRB approvals, data collection began by using an online consent agreement, demographic questions, and an open-ended questionnaire. Data analysis started as soon as the first response was received.

To ensure adherence to ethical standards, all participants were provided with an informed consent form explaining the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures (Creswell & Poth, 2024). An audit trail was maintained, documenting each step of the research process, including participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). This detailed documentation enhances the study's credibility and replicability.

Population and Sample Selection

The target population of this study was the homeschooling families of South Florida. The estimated total population is approximately 3,000 members of an active social media group serving homeschooling families in this region. This group represented a diverse range of participants, providing rich insights into the problem and purpose of this study. This basic qualitative research study used purposeful sampling to secure 15 families from the South Florida social media group as participants.

Creswell and Creswell (2022) explained that purposive sampling is a deliberate strategy in qualitative research that enables the selection of participants or sites that are most informative for addressing the research problem. This approach ensures that participants are selected based on their ability to contribute meaningful perspectives rather than random selection. Purposeful selection of data-rich subjects is emphasized in qualitative research to maximize scarce resources (Mulisa, 2022b). Purposive sampling was appropriate because it enabled the selection of

participants who met specific criteria aligned with the research purpose, thereby ensuring the relevance and depth of the collected data (Taherdoost, 2022).

The inclusion criteria were that the family must have been living in South Florida, and the student must have been enrolled or planned to enroll as a homeschooler. The exclusion criteria were whether the family lived outside of South Florida or planned to disenroll from homeschooling. Obtaining and describing samples accurately enhances the clarity and validity of research results and facilitates generalization and replication of the findings (Hughes et al., 2022). Potential participants were asked whether they lived in South Florida and whether they had enrolled or planned to enroll their children in homeschooling. Participants had to answer yes to both questions to participate in the research questionnaire.

Recruitment

Three social media groups serving South Florida homeschooling families were sent site permission requests (see Appendix A) to recruit 3,000 members from the target population to participate in this study. Permission from only one social media group administrator, whose group has over 3,000 members, was granted (see Appendix B). Recruitment did not begin until IRB approval had been granted (see Appendix C). A social media message for a Facebook post was created along with a QR code that linked to the informed consent, demographic screener, and 15-question open-ended questionnaire, which were posted on the social media sites that provided permission. The recruitment flyer outlined the study's purpose and inclusion criteria (see Appendix D).

Potential participants were asked to either click a link or scan a QR code to access the informed consent. Participants reviewed the informed consent so that they had a complete understanding of the purpose of the research, research design and procedures, how participants

were selected based on the inclusion criteria, and understood that participation was voluntary and they could choose to participate or withdrawal during the study at any time without repercussions, risks and benefits, confidentiality, and how the results of the study would be shared (see Appendix E). Participants were also given an email address on the informed consent form for requesting further information if needed. No data were collected until participants provided electronic consent by selecting 'Yes' in the Google Form and entering their name before proceeding. The system contains logic and requires completion of this step before participants can access the demographic screener.

Once potential participants signed the informed consent, they were forwarded to the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix F). This questionnaire contained questions to determine if potential participants met the inclusion criteria. If a potential participant did not meet the inclusion criteria, a message thanking them for their interest was displayed along with a notification that they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Demographic questions were crucial in the research survey for inclusion and exclusion purposes, qualifying or disqualifying potential participants (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Participants who met the inclusion criteria were then directed to the 15-question open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix G).

Data Instrument

The primary research instrument for this basic qualitative study was an online 15-question open-ended questionnaire, a crucial tool for gathering pertinent information about the research topic (Taherdoost, 2022). Participants were recruited from social media groups that serve South Florida homeschooling families. Parents of homeschoolers voluntarily responded to the Google Forms questionnaire via a link. If they agreed to participate, they electronically signed the consent form and continued to the demographic questions to determine if the inclusion

criteria had been met, followed by the content questions. No data were collected until the informed consent was signed (University of Michigan, n.d.).

If participants met the inclusion criteria, they were then forwarded to the 15-question open-ended questionnaire, which took 25–35 minutes to complete. The questionnaire consisted of 15 open-ended questions. Creswell and Poth (2024) recommend using open-ended questions for qualitative research studies to gather participants' perceptions and experiences from their perspectives. The questions must align with the research problem and purpose, and be able to answer the research questions. The alignment between the survey questions and the research questions is as follows: Questions 1, 2, 13, and 14 gather participants' experiences and perceptions to address Research Question 1, which explores the factors influencing homeschooling decisions. Questions 3–12 focus on participants' preferences for curriculum and program elements, addressing Research Questions 2 and 3 regarding homeschooling families' preferences in these areas. Additionally, Questions 13 and 14 also provide insights into participants' experiences and perceptions of the challenges and disappointments of homeschooling.

After completing the questionnaire, participants received an automated email with their responses and had 1 week to verify their accuracy. This process, called member checking, enhances the credibility of the study (Birt et al., 2016). If no response was received within that time, the responses were considered accurate.

Instrument Validation

Field testing questionnaires provides validity and reliability for the instrument and the research findings (Anto & Sugiyanto, 2023). The questionnaire was sent to three SMEs to review for content validity and provide feedback on modifying the questions to ensure they gather

pertinent information to answer the research questions (see Appendix H). The SMEs were experienced educational leaders with over 25 years of experience and no affiliation with the American College of Education. One is a retired superintendent of a California school district, one is a retired Inspector General of a Florida school district, and one is an elementary school administrator. All SMEs have experience dealing with students going in and out of homeschooling. Subject matter experts also commented on the questionnaire's wording to provide better clarity. The instrument was modified after accepting some of their feedback (see Appendix I).

Data Collection

Data collection, an integral part of the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2024), cannot begin until IRB approval is obtained. Once consent was obtained, participants completed a brief demographic screener to determine whether they met the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria. Since this questionnaire served solely as a screening tool, it was not used for data collection or triangulation. This step ensured that only eligible participants progressed to the next stage of the study. Participants who met the eligibility criteria then completed the open-ended questionnaire, which took 20–30 minutes. If participants did not meet the criteria, they received a message thanking them for their interest and a notification that they were not eligible to continue.

After participants completed the open-ended questionnaire, they received a copy of their responses via email for member checking. This process allows participants to review their answers, verify their accuracy, make corrections, clarify responses if needed, and add any additional information they consider relevant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking enhances the credibility of the data by ensuring that participants' perspectives are accurately captured before proceeding with analysis (Birt et al., 2016). This approach supports

trustworthiness and validity in qualitative research by involving participants in verifying the accuracy of their data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Participants were given 1 week to review and respond with any changes or clarifications.

Data Preparation

In qualitative research, organizing data systematically is crucial for effective analysis. This process involves securely storing participant responses, assigning pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality, and compiling data into manageable formats (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Participant responses were downloaded to a secure computer using MS Excel spreadsheets. Pseudonyms referred to participants in this study. Data from the spreadsheets was then merged and broken down into a word bank.

Data Analysis

This basic qualitative research study used the Miles and Huberman (1994) thematic analysis model by data reduction and coding for data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest reducing the data into focused, simplified, and abstract categories and codes by condensing data from written or transcribed formats and using matrices to visually represent the relevant information. The detailed response data from this research were broken down into a word bank using Microsoft Excel and the inductive inference process. Keywords were then extracted from the word bank to create categories and codes, arranged in a matrix by codes, and displayed in a tabular format for easy viewing. The table was then explored and analyzed to extract emerging themes.

Reliability and Validity

Researchers must ensure that the research process, methodology, and design align with the research problem and purpose. Instruments used must be reliable and validated; data

collection techniques must be consistent and rigorous, with biases and errors kept to a minimum (Coleman, 2022). The validity of a qualitative exploration depends on the honesty and integrity with which phenomena of interest are described, interpreted, and explained. Achieving qualitative validity requires collecting, transcribing, and interpreting data from the participant's perspective, performing unbiased analysis, and truthfully reporting the results and findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Credibility

Meydan and Akkaş (2024) suggest reflexivity should be used at every stage of the study process to minimize bias and guarantee proper interpretation and portrayal of participant voices. To ensure the credibility of this research study, bias had to be avoided as much as possible. Experts in the field reviewed the survey questionnaire to ensure minimal bias. Member checking provided additional credibility and was conducted to have participants verify that the survey responses were accurate and that the codes and emerging themes accurately reflected their feelings, experiences, and perspectives. Participants were emailed the questionnaire responses and asked to verify their accuracy.

Dependability

Dependability concerns the consistency and repeatability of the qualitative research study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). An audit trail, consisting of documentation and evidence of the research design, implementation, processes, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and interpretations, can significantly enhance the research study's reliability and allow other researchers to evaluate the feasibility of replicating this process in their research (Coleman, 2022). A reflexivity journal was used to enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of the

findings while reducing potential biases in the coding and data analysis process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

Confirmability

Providing a compelling justification for the study's significance also enhances confirmability (Yadav, 2022). The research study's validity, dependability, and credibility are referred to as confirmability. Confirmability is provided by objective analyses of participants' feelings, experiences, and perspectives, and is supported by verified study data free of bias. Findings are more likely to be confirmed when direct quotes from questionnaire answers, interviews, or other comparable data are included.

Transferability

To improve transferability, researchers should use a representative sample of the population and emphasize the study context through detailed descriptions and narratives (Yadav, 2022). Potential for analytical generalization across contexts, environments, people, and samples is known as transferability and is established through external validity. While homeschooling enrollment has been steadily rising, most school districts have experienced sharp enrollment losses (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024); the results of this study can be applied to other districts facing comparable issues.

Ethical Procedures

Ethics are essential in conducting research studies to guarantee reliability and validity, honesty and trustworthiness, and to safeguard the rights and welfare of human participants. Research studies involving human subjects must be justified and beneficial to society. The research purpose, methodology, potential risks, and benefits must be clearly explained to participants, and their involvement must be voluntary and free from coercion (Taquette & Borges

da Matta Souza, 2022). The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) states that there are three guiding principles of research ethics: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

Respect for Persons

This research study safeguarded the privacy and security of the data as well as the participants' identity, anonymity, secrecy, and dignity. Participants provided informed consent before participating, ensuring they understood the purpose, procedures, and their rights in this study. Pseudonyms were used to refer to participants, and no identifiable data were collected to guarantee that participants' identities were kept confidential. All electronic data were stored on a password-protected, encrypted external drive that was kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. Only the researcher had access to the key and password. Any paper notes or printed documents generated were also stored in the locked filing cabinet. After 3 years, all electronic files will be permanently deleted, and any paper materials will be shredded to ensure complete record destruction. Participation in this research study was strictly voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without consequences.

Beneficence

Research studies must minimize risk to participants and improve society and human subjects, a key principle of beneficence of *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). This research study sought to provide homeschoolers with the curriculum, activities, and support they desire and to utilize the underused portions of public school buildings so schools did not need to be closed. This study presents minimal risks to participants, as participants were referred to by pseudonyms and no identifiable data were collected.

In accordance with the National Institutes of Health (2023) data management and sharing policy, research data must be securely stored for 3 years to allow for verification and reproducibility of findings. This study adhered to these guidelines by securely storing all collected data on a password-protected, encrypted external drive that was kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. After 3 years, the hard drive will be permanently deleted using double-deletion protocols (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2022). By implementing these safeguards, the study ensured participant confidentiality while upholding ethical research standards.

Justice

The goal of justice is to encourage a just and equal distribution of risk and benefits (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). This research benefits homeschoolers by providing them with much-needed curriculum and program support from a homeschooling program. The severely under-enrolled public schools and their communities will benefit if the proposed school closure is not needed. Additionally, participant recruitment was conducted through a homeschooling social media group in South Florida with over 3,000 members to ensure equitable opportunities for diverse families to participate in the study.

Chapter Summary

Homeschooling enrollment in Florida has surged by 71% since 2017, rising from 89,817 to 154,289 homeschoolers as of 2023 (Florida Department of Education, 2024). A South Florida school district suffered significant enrollment declines in the last 5 years, primarily due to homeschooling, which doubled enrollment to more than 9,800 in 2023 (Florida Department of Education, 2024). The declines forced the South Florida School District to consider closing or

repurposing some schools, affecting students, families, school districts, and the communities where the closed schools are located. This basic qualitative study explored the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements homeschooling families in South Florida desire.

The study employed a basic qualitative research design using an online questionnaire with 15 open-ended questions to gather rich data from homeschooling families. Purposive sampling was used to recruit 15 participants from a South Florida homeschooling social media group with over 3,000 members. Inclusion criteria required participants to be South Florida residents who were homeschooling or planning to homeschool their children. Following IRB approval, recruitment was conducted through social media posts with links to the informed consent and questionnaire.

Data collection procedures include obtaining electronic informed consent, screening for eligibility through a demographic questionnaire, and administering the open-ended questionnaire. The data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's (1994) thematic analysis model, involving data reduction, coding, and the identification of emerging themes. To ensure trustworthiness, multiple strategies were incorporated into the study, including member checking, expert review of the questionnaire, a reflexivity journal, and a detailed audit trail. Ethical considerations were guided by *The Belmont Report's* principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, with measures to protect participant confidentiality and data security (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis of data collected from homeschooling families in South Florida, organized according to the research questions and themes that emerged during the analysis.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results

Homeschooling enrollment increased significantly from approximately 15,000 in the 1970s to 3.7 million in 2021 (National Home Education Research Institute, 2025). Public school enrollment declined from 50.8 million students in 2019 to 49.6 million in 2022 and is projected to drop to 47 million by 2030 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). Persistent enrollment declines resulted in public school revenue losses (Malkus, 2022). Homeschooling enrollment in Florida increased by over 70% from the 2017–18 school year to the 2022–23 school year, rising from 89,817 to 154,289 students (Florida Department of Education, 2024). Districts in South Florida, which are experiencing declining enrollment due to families choosing homeschooling and other educational alternatives, plan to redefine their schools to offer more academic programs that appeal to families, encouraging them to send their children to public schools (Johnson & Tanner, 2024).

The problem is the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire among homeschooling families in South Florida. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida on why they choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire. The research questions that guided this study were:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding the factors influencing their decision to homeschool?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for curriculum in a homeschooling program?

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for program elements in a homeschooling program?

Participant recruitment and consent processes are described first, followed by details of the questionnaire design, data collection procedures, and data preparation methods. The data analysis section includes the coding and thematic analysis procedures used to identify patterns in participant responses. Major themes that emerged from the data are presented with supporting evidence from the questionnaire responses. Based on these findings, each research question is answered systematically. Trustworthiness strategies implemented throughout the study are discussed, including credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive summary of the research results.

Data Collection

Participant recruitment commenced on August 28, 2025, following approval from the American College of Education Institutional Review Board and receipt of site permission from the social media group administrator. Using purposive sampling, 16 participants initially consented to participate from a social media group, and data were collected via a Google survey link. The Google Form consisted of three sequential stages. Interested participants read the consent form. If participants did not understand or did not agree to participate, they exited the Google Form, and no data were collected. If participants understood and agreed to participate, they provided electronic consent by selecting 'Yes' in the Google Forms and entering their name. Next, participants proceeded to the demographic screener. If participants did not meet the inclusion criteria, no data would be collected; they were directed to exit the Google Form and thanked for their participation. If participants met the inclusion criteria, they were directed to the

open-ended online questionnaire, consisting of 15 questions and taking approximately 25–35 minutes to complete.

Data collection was completed on September 17, 2025, spanning 3 weeks, after 16 electronic informed consents and subsequent responses were received from a pool of over 3000 members on the social media group. One participant whose child was not enrolled in homeschooling was excluded from the analysis, resulting in a final sample of 15 participants. Data were then downloaded from Google Forms to a stand-alone, password-protected, and encrypted external drive in Microsoft Excel file format. All data were stored securely in Excel spreadsheets, and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. Fifteen participants whose data were included in the analysis received an email on September 29, 2025, thanking them for their participation and requesting that they complete the member verification process. This allowed them to verify the accuracy of their answers and make clarifications. The process supported credibility by ensuring that the responses represented the participants' genuine voices and perspectives.

The questionnaire explored factors influencing homeschooling, curriculum needs, program elements, extracurricular preferences, and the challenges homeschoolers face. Three SMEs validated the instrument's design, and modifications were made based on their feedback. Each participant was asked to provide detailed narrative responses, and no multiple-choice items were included to ensure depth of qualitative data. The demographics of the 15 homeschooling families are listed in Table 1.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Participant (Pseudonym)	Gender	Number of Children	Years Homeschooling	Primary Motivation
P1	Female	2	4	Family Bonding
P2	Male	3	2	Flexibility
P3	Female	1	1	Faith/Values
P4	Female	4	6	Personalized Education
P5	Male	2	5	Safety
P6	Female	3	2	Curriculum Options
P7	Female	2	3	Family Bonding
P8	Female	1	2	Faith/Values
P9	Male	2	4	Academic Rigor
P10	Female	2	1	Flexibility
P11	Female	3	7	Family Bonding
P12	Male	2	3	Freedom/Independence
P13	Female	2	6	Faith/Values
P14	Female	1	2	Special Needs Support
P15	Male	3	5	Family Bonding

Data Preparation

Upon closing the data collection phase, the data were downloaded from Google Forms to a stand-alone, password-protected, and encrypted external drive in Microsoft Excel file format. Participant responses were systematically organized into Excel spreadsheets. Data were cleaned by removing incomplete or duplicate responses. Fifteen participants who met the inclusion criteria were assigned pseudonyms to protect confidentiality, using pseudonyms Participant 1–15. The only personal information collected is participants' email addresses, names, and those of South Florida residents who were either currently enrolled or plan to enroll as homeschoolers.

The data drive was kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. Access to the digital key and password was restricted, and all paper notes and printed documents were secured in a locked filing cabinet. After 3 years, all electronic files will be permanently deleted, and any paper materials will be shredded to ensure the destruction of records. Responses were converted to a word bank using Microsoft Excel. Responses were reduced to a word bank of frequently used terms and phrases, which allowed quantification of word frequencies while retaining qualitative meaning.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman's (1994) thematic analysis model consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, and was used for this study. The analysis began with in vivo coding, in which participants' own words were used to generate initial codes. These codes were then grouped into descriptive categories, which represented higher-order patterns in the data. For example, frequent use of terms such as flexibility, freedom, and control was grouped into a category labeled freedom/independence. categories were then clustered into broader themes, such as family-centered motivations for homeschooling.

Data reduction was conducted, in which raw data were condensed into codes and word banks, with redundancies removed, and the focus was on recurring and meaningful expressions. Coding followed, with in vivo and descriptive codes assigned; for example, time with family, love, and bonding were coded as family bonding. Categorization was then performed, with codes grouped into categories; for example, family bonding, personalized learning, and faith-based education were grouped under the theme of family-centered motivations. Finally, theme development occurred through iterative analysis, with constant comparison across participants,

and themes were refined until saturation was achieved. The process was transparent and documented in an audit trail using Excel files. Each step was recorded to ensure dependability and allow for replication. Five themes emerged after the responses, and their associated codes and categories were analyzed (see Table 2).

Table 2

Codes, Categories, and Themes

Theme	Category	Codes / Keyword	Frequency
Preference/reasons for homeschooling	Home/Family Time & Love	home, child, family, love	42–50
	Personalized Education	need, education, school	19–24
	Freedom/Independence	free, flexibility, independence	14
	Faith/Values	God, faith, belief	6–8
Curriculum needs	Core Subjects	math, science, language arts, AP	18–20
	Non-Core & Technical	art, music, foreign language, coding, certifications	15+
Resources	Support Networks	group, tutor, co-op, online, center	15–16
	Affordability	affordable, funding	2–4
Program elements desired	Extracurricular Activities	field trips, sports and clubs, competitions, certificates, and museum	16–20
	Structured Counseling	College applications and financial aid	5–7
Challenges and disappointments	Limited access to resources	Courses, books, AP, EOCs, tutoring	8–12
	Balancing dual roles	Limited time	16–20
	Social stigma	Stigma, judgment from peers	2–4

Findings/Results

The analysis of data collected through open-ended questionnaires revealed five major themes that address the research questions guiding this study. Through systematic thematic

analysis of participant responses, patterns emerged that illuminate homeschooling families' motivations, curriculum preferences, and desired program elements. The themes presented below offer detailed insights into the perceptions and experiences of homeschooling families in South Florida, supported by extensive quotations from participants that give voice to their perspectives.

Major Themes

Five major themes emerged from the data analysis. These themes included family-centered motivations for homeschooling, curriculum needs and preferences, desire for resources and support networks, program elements desired, and challenges and disappointments. Each theme is described in detail below, with extensive supporting participant quotes, followed by an explanation of how the major themes align with the research questions (see Table 3).

Table 3

Major Themes and Alignment to Research Questions

Theme	Description	Supporting Participant Insights	Research Question Alignment
Family-centered motivations	Families homeschool for bonding, flexibility, safety, and faith.	"We value the ability to spend more time together as a family." (P1)	RQ1
Curriculum needs & preferences	Families want rigorous core academics plus enrichment and technical skills.	"We want math, science, but also art and music programs." (P7)	RQ2
Resources & support networks	Families seek affordable co-ops, tutoring, counseling, and extracurriculars.	"Access to co-ops and tutors makes homeschooling manageable." (P12)	RQ3
Program elements desired	Families request field trips, certifications, extracurriculars, and advising.	"Certifications prepare students for future careers." (P2)	RQ3

Theme	Description	Supporting Participant Insights	Research Question Alignment
Challenges & disappointments	Families report stigma, limited resources, and difficulty balancing roles.	“It’s exhausting being both mom and teacher.” (P14)	Cross-cutting across RQs

Theme 1: Family-Centered Motivations for Homeschooling

Participants consistently described family as the central reason for choosing homeschooling. They emphasized spending quality time together, strengthening family bonds, and instilling values that aligned with their beliefs. Flexibility and safety also played a significant role. P1 explained, “Homeschooling allows me to put family first. My children are not rushed out the door every morning, and we spend more time together, which has made our bond stronger.” P8 wrote, “The freedom to plan our day around what works best for us has reduced stress and allowed us to focus on love, learning, and togetherness.”

Faith-based motivations were frequently expressed. “In public schools, faith is excluded. Homeschooling gives me the chance to integrate God into everything we do, which is central to our family,” shared P3. P13 emphasized, “Teaching my children according to our faith is the number one reason we homeschool.” Concerns about public schools also influenced motivation. P5 explained, “We left because my son was bullied and constantly anxious. Homeschooling gave us peace and allowed him to thrive.” P14 added, “Public schools couldn’t meet the needs of my child with special needs. At home, we can tailor everything.”

Theme 2: Curriculum Needs and Preferences

Families emphasized the importance of access to rigorous and flexible curricula. They wanted strong foundations in math, science, and language arts, but equally valued opportunities in the arts, foreign languages, and technical fields. P9 stated, “I want my child to have the

opportunity to take AP classes so she won't fall behind her peers in public schools." P4 emphasized, "STEM programs are essential. We need labs, hands-on activities, and more advanced options than what I can provide at home."

Non-core subjects were also highlighted. P7 explained, "Academics are important, but my daughter loves art and drama. These subjects give her joy and help her develop creativity." P11 reinforced this idea: "Music is a huge part of our lives. We need programs that don't ignore these subjects." Technical and vocational courses were frequently requested. P2 wrote, "I want my children to leave with real-world skills like coding and certifications that prepare them for jobs." P6 agreed: "Industry certifications in healthcare or IT would be valuable options for older homeschoolers." Flexibility was considered crucial. P10 said, "Some days we prefer online, other times in-person is better. Programs should let us choose."

Theme 3: Desire for Resources and Support Networks

Families highlighted the necessity of affordable resources and supportive communities. Co-ops, tutors, online centers, and extracurricular opportunities were central to their requests. P1 shared, "Without our co-op, I couldn't do this. It provides not only academic support but also social opportunities for my children." P12 added, "Tutors for specific subjects like algebra and chemistry are vital. I'm not always equipped to teach these advanced areas." Affordability was also emphasized. P8 explained, "If programs aren't affordable, they won't be sustainable for most families. Funding support is crucial."

Extracurricular activities were highly valued. P15 noted, "We need our children to have the same access to sports and clubs as public school kids." P5 added, "Community service, internships, and debate clubs help kids grow socially, and homeschoolers should not be left out." Families also expressed the need for counseling and advising services. P9 wrote, "Guidance on

college applications and financial aid would make a huge difference. Many homeschoolers miss out on that kind of structured support.”

Theme 4: Program Elements Desired

Families highlighted specific program features that would enhance their homeschooling experience. These included extracurricular activities, structured counseling, regular field trips, opportunities for academic competitions, and access to technical certifications. P15 emphasized, "We need our children to have the same access to sports and clubs as public school kids." P9 noted, "Guidance on college applications and financial aid would make a huge difference." P2 explained, "Certifications in technology or healthcare prepare our kids for the real world." P6 added, "Field trips make learning real. We need more community partnerships to make these possible."

Theme 5: Challenges and Disappointments

Despite the benefits, families noted struggles that complicate homeschooling. They reported concerns about social stigma, limited access to resources, and the difficulty of balancing dual roles as parent and teacher. P8 shared, "Some people still think homeschooling is second-rate. That stigma gets tiring." P12 explained, "I can handle some subjects, but not advanced math. Resources aren't always available or affordable." P14 expressed, "As a mom, I wear two hats, parent and teacher, and it's exhausting." P5 added, "Finding the right balance of time, money, and energy is a constant challenge."

Answering the Research Questions

The five major themes that emerged from the data analysis provided comprehensive answers to the three research questions guiding this study. Each research question is addressed below with detailed explanations of how the themes connect to participants' perceptions and

experiences. The themes reveal patterns across participant responses that demonstrate the motivations, preferences, and needs of homeschooling families in South Florida.

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding the factors influencing their decision to homeschool? Research Question 1 is primarily answered through Theme 1, family-centered motivations for homeschooling, and Theme 5, challenges and disappointments (see Figure 1). Homeschooling families in South Florida based their decision to homeschool on various interconnected factors they identified. The main reason for homeschooling, according to participants, was to build stronger family relationships through shared time together, as they preferred to structure their days around family needs rather than school timetables. P1 explained, "Homeschooling allows me to put family first. My children are not rushed out the door every morning, and we spend more time together, which has made our bond stronger." P8 wrote, "The freedom to plan our day around what works best for us has reduced stress and allowed us to focus on love, learning, and togetherness."

Participants stated their faith-based reasons for homeschooling, including wanting to teach their children religious values through daily education, which they believed public schools would not support. P3 shared, "In public schools, faith is excluded. Homeschooling gives me the chance to integrate God into everything we do, which is central to our family." P13 emphasized, "Teaching my children according to our faith is the number one reason we homeschool."

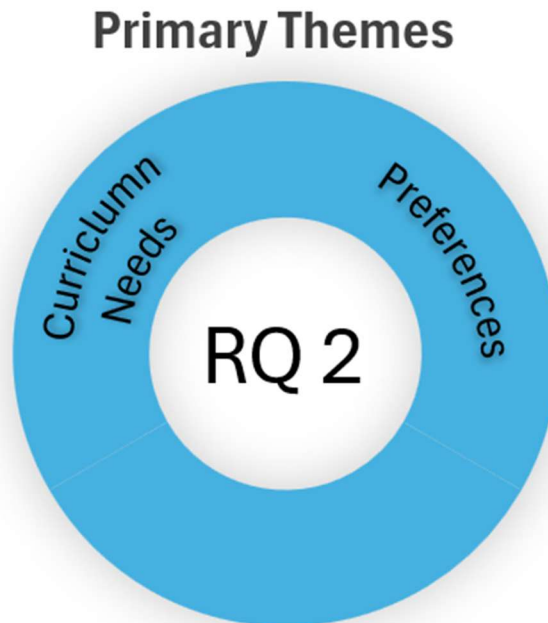
Figure 1*Connection to RQ1 and Themes*

The decision to homeschool stemmed from two main factors: safety concerns and negative experiences with public schools. The participants explained particular adverse incidents that led them to choose homeschooling because of bullying, insufficient support for students with special needs, and unsuitable learning conditions. P5 explained, "We left because my son was bullied and constantly anxious. Homeschooling gave us peace and allowed him to thrive." P14 added, "Public schools couldn't meet the needs of my child with special needs. At home, we can tailor everything." Families chose homeschooling because they wanted to create individualized educational programs that met their children's specific needs. The combination of positive motivations such as family bonding, faith integration, and educational autonomy, along with negative push factors such as bullying, inadequate accommodation, and lack of challenge, created a compelling rationale for homeschooling that prioritized both family values and children's well-being.

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for curriculum in a homeschooling program? Research Question 2 is addressed through Theme 2, curriculum needs and preferences (see Figure 2), which revealed that homeschooling families seek comprehensive, rigorous, and flexible curriculum options. Participants stated that their children need solid academic programs in mathematics, science, and language arts because these subjects form the base of their education. Multiple families requested Advanced Placement courses to keep their children academically competitive with public school students. P9 stated, "I want my child to have the opportunity to take AP classes so she won't fall behind her peers in public schools." P4 emphasized, "STEM programs are essential. We need labs, hands-on activities, and more advanced options than what I can provide at home."

Participants were equally supportive of non-core subject enrichment programs, including arts and music, drama, and foreign languages, because they believed these subjects help students develop creativity and personal growth in addition to academic success. P7 explained, "Academics are important, but my daughter loves art and drama. These subjects give her joy and help her develop creativity." P11 reinforced this idea: "Music is a huge part of our life. We need programs that don't ignore these subjects."

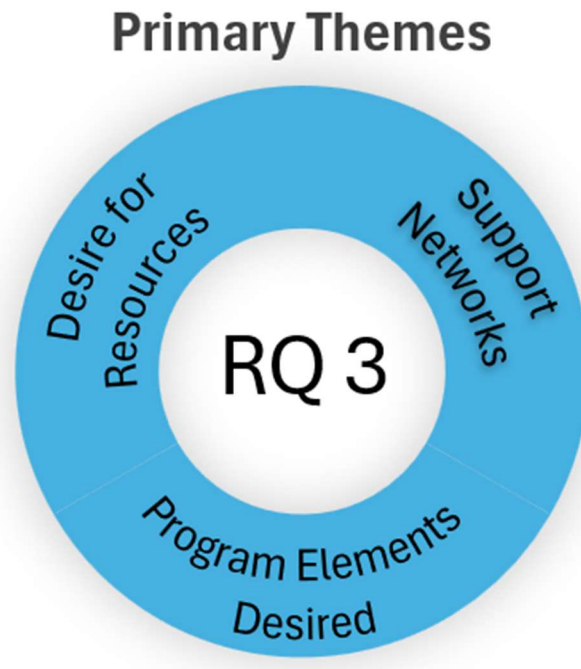
Figure 2*Connection to RQ2 and Themes*

The questionnaire results showed that families strongly want access to technical and vocational education programs that include industry certifications in technology, healthcare, and information technology. P2 wrote, "I want my children to leave with real-world skills like coding and certifications that prepare them for jobs." P6 agreed: "Industry certifications in healthcare or IT would be valuable options for older homeschoolers." The families believed these certifications would teach their children useful skills that would lead to better career opportunities and job readiness after graduation. Participants indicated that homeschooling families treat the curriculum as a complete educational system that prepares students for future careers and professional lives. They explained that the curriculum's delivery format needs to be flexible to help families manage their varying schedules, learning approaches, and resource levels. P10 said, "Some days we prefer online, other times in-person is better. Programs should let us choose."

Participants wanted to choose their preferred learning approach from in-person, online, or hybrid while keeping access to excellent educational materials for all subjects.

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for program elements in a homeschooling program? Research Question 3 is comprehensively addressed through Theme 3, desire for resources and support networks, and Theme 4, program elements desired (see Figure 3). Participants identified a broad range of program elements they perceived as essential to successful homeschooling experiences. The need for affordable support resources became essential because families requested cooperative learning groups (co-ops), subject-specific tutoring, and online learning centers to extend parent-led instruction. P1 shared, "Without our co-op, I couldn't do this. It provides not only academic support but also social opportunities for my children." P12 added, "Tutors for specific subjects like algebra and chemistry are vital. I'm not always equipped to teach these advanced areas." P8 explained, "If programs aren't affordable, they won't be sustainable for most families. Funding support is crucial."

Figure 3*Connection to RQ3 and Themes*

Participants from families stressed that their children needed access to extracurricular activities, social events, and guidance services. The participants strongly wanted their children to have access to the same range of extracurricular activities as public school students, including sports teams and clubs, community service, debate teams, and internships. P15 noted, "We need our children to have the same access to sports and clubs as public school kids." P5 added, "Community service, internships, and debate clubs help kids grow socially, and homeschoolers should not be left out." Families stated that their children need structured counseling services and college advising programs that include assistance with college applications, financial aid management, and career development planning. P9 wrote, "Guidance on college applications and financial aid would make a huge difference. Many homeschoolers miss out on that kind of structured support."

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research ensures that study findings accurately represent participants' perspectives and that the research process maintains rigor throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Multiple strategies were used to establish trustworthiness across four key dimensions: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. The implementation of these strategies during data analysis and findings development is described below, demonstrating how the principles discussed in the methodology were upheld throughout the research process.

Credibility

Credibility was maintained through member checking, SME validation, and prolonged engagement with the data. Following completion of questionnaires, all participants received their individual responses via email to verify accuracy and confirm that their statements authentically represented their experiences, feelings, and perspectives regarding homeschooling. This member-checking process allowed participants to clarify, expand on, or correct any responses that may have been misinterpreted during initial data entry. The result was that findings reflected the participants' voices rather than misrepresentations.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process facilitated deep immersion in participants' perspectives through repeated reading and systematic coding of responses. This prolonged engagement with the data enhanced credibility because patterns and themes emerged organically from participant narratives rather than being imposed based on preconceived assumptions. Additionally, SMEs in homeschooling and educational research validated the questionnaire prior to data collection, which strengthened the instrument's ability to elicit meaningful and relevant information from participants. Throughout the analysis process,

reflexivity was practiced to identify and minimize potential biases, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in participant data (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024).

Transferability

Transferability was enhanced through rich, thick descriptions of participants, contexts, and findings. Detailed demographic information about participants was provided, including family structures, years of homeschooling experience, and geographic locations within South Florida. These comprehensive descriptions enable readers to assess the applicability of findings to their own contexts and determine whether the study's results may transfer to homeschooling families in other regions or educational settings.

Purposeful sampling strategies ensured representation of diverse homeschooling families with varying motivations, curriculum approaches, and resource needs (Campbell et al., 2020). By including participants with different backgrounds and experiences, the study captured a range of perspectives that reflect the heterogeneity of the homeschooling population. The findings are specific to South Florida families; however, the detailed contextual information and diverse participant sample provide a foundation for readers to evaluate potential transferability to other school districts experiencing similar enrollment challenges or serving homeschooling populations with comparable characteristics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024).

Confirmability

Confirmability was established by grounding all findings in direct participant evidence and maintaining objectivity throughout the analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each theme presented in the findings section was substantiated with multiple direct quotations from participants. This demonstrates that conclusions were derived from actual data rather than

preconceived notions or personal biases. The extensive use of participants' voices throughout the findings ensures that the results reflect their authentic perspectives and experiences.

An audit trail documenting coding decisions, theme development, and analytical interpretations was maintained throughout the data analysis process (Coleman, 2022). This documentation provides transparency into how raw data were transformed into meaningful themes and enables external verification of the analytical process. Findings were presented with explicit connections to participant quotes, and interpretations remained faithful to the data. Through these measures, confirmability was strengthened, and the potential for bias was minimized (Yadav, 2022).

Dependability

Dependability was maintained through consistent application of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process and comprehensive documentation of all analytical decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). A detailed audit trail was created, including records of initial coding, code refinement, theme identification, theme review, and theme definition stages. This systematic approach ensured that the analysis process was transparent, logical, and replicable. A reflexivity journal was maintained throughout data analysis to document potential biases, analytical decisions, and the rationale for interpretive choices (Coleman, 2022; Rose & Johnson, 2020). This journal documented how themes evolved during the analysis and captured reflections on how personal experiences or assumptions might influence the interpretation of participant responses. The combination of systematic analytical procedures, detailed documentation, and reflexive practice ensured that the research process was conducted consistently and rigorously. This documentation provides sufficient detail to enable replication of the analytical approach.

Chapter Summary

Findings revealed that homeschooling families in South Florida are motivated by family-centered values, desire rigorous yet flexible curricula, and require affordable resources and support networks to sustain their educational efforts. Five major themes emerged from the analysis: family-centered motivations, curriculum needs and preferences, desire for resources and support networks, desired program elements, and challenges and disappointments. These themes directly address the three research questions and provide comprehensive insights into the perceptions and experiences of homeschooling families in the region.

Families identified strengthening bonds, integrating faith, ensuring safety, and addressing inadequate public school support as primary motivations for homeschooling. Curriculum preferences emphasized both academic rigor in core subjects and enrichment opportunities in arts, music, and technical/vocational fields. Consistently, families requested affordable access to co-ops, tutoring, extracurricular activities, and college counseling services. This highlights the need for holistic support systems. Despite the benefits of homeschooling, families reported challenges including social stigma, limited resources, and the demanding dual role of parent and teacher.

Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability strategies. Member checking, prolonged engagement, and reflexivity supported credibility. Thick descriptions and purposeful sampling enhanced transferability. Participant quotes and an audit trail strengthened confirmability. Systematic analysis procedures and a reflexivity journal maintained dependability. These findings provide a foundation for understanding how educational programs and policies can better support homeschooling families. The final chapter will interpret these findings within the context of existing literature,

discuss implications for educational practice and policy, acknowledge the study's limitations, and propose directions for future research that can advance understanding of homeschooling families' needs and contribute to more equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

This basic qualitative study explored the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding why they choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire. The research sought to fill a gap in understanding how public school districts can better support homeschooling families by utilizing underutilized facilities. Guided by three research questions, the study explored the factors influencing these families' decisions to homeschool, their curriculum preferences, and the program elements they seek in a public homeschooling model.

The study found families homeschool for many reasons, including academic needs, social-emotional considerations, cultural factors, and the flexibility it offers. Participants highlighted the value of having personalized curriculum choices, flexible schedules, and control over teaching methods. Families also showed strong interest in resources provided by public schools, such as specialized courses, extracurricular activities, and services like counseling, college, and career advice, as long as these supports maintain the independence that is central to homeschooling. Results indicated that although families highly value autonomy, many are open to collaborative relationships with public school districts if the support offered is optional and non-intrusive. These findings directly address the three research questions guiding this study: factors influencing homeschooling decisions (RQ1), curriculum preferences (RQ2), and desired program elements (RQ3). Participants frequently mentioned wanting programs that combine personalized learning with enrichment opportunities, chances for social interaction, and access to facilities and services not usually available at home.

This discussion relates the study's key findings to existing literature and the theoretical frameworks that guided the research. The following sections address research limitations and

offer recommendations for future research and practical application. Finally, the implications for educational leadership are summarized, along with the study's key contributions.

Findings, Interpretations, and Conclusions

Analysis of questionnaire responses from 15 South Florida homeschooling families revealed three major findings. First, regarding motivation for homeschooling, participants consistently cited flexibility and family time as primary factors, with dissatisfaction with public schools also playing a significant role. Second, concerning curriculum preferences, families expressed strong interest in core academics with flexible implementation, including options for virtual learning, customizable schedules, and access to advanced courses. Third, participants identified tutoring, college counseling, and socialization opportunities as key support services. These findings are discussed in detail below, with connections to existing literature and the theoretical framework.

Reasons for Homeschooling

Regarding factors influencing the decision to homeschool, the findings revealed that the primary reason cited by all the participants for choosing to homeschool their children is the flexibility it offers and the opportunity to allocate more quality time as a family. Batts et al. (2024) found that homeschooling strengthens family cohesion by prioritizing shared time and supporting the transmission of cultural values. This study confirmed that all 15 participants emphasized flexibility and quality family time as their primary motivation. Another significant motivation is pursuing personalized education, as reported by 13 participants. These results are consistent with Maslow's humanistic learning theory, which emphasizes learner autonomy and self-direction; according to this framework, optimal learning occurs when children engage in

personalized, adaptable educational experiences that foster self-actualization (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021).

Flexibility to determine the content and timing of their children's education according to individual needs was a significant factor, especially for children with special needs.

Dissatisfaction with public schools, cited by 10 parents as stemming from safety concerns, bureaucracy, excessive testing, and mismanaged classrooms, was also a reason for homeschooling. Similarly, Forlin et al. (2025) found dissatisfaction with public schools is the primary reason most families opt for homeschooling. This study's findings confirm this pattern, with two-thirds of participants (10 of 15) citing specific concerns about traditional school environments.

Socialization remained a significant consideration for homeschooling families, prompting parents to seek intentional avenues for their children to interact with peers. Naidaitė and Stasiunaitienė (2024) found that homeschooling parents intentionally create socialization opportunities through extracurricular activities and community engagement. Consistent with these findings, participants in this study reported actively seeking peer interaction opportunities aligned with their children's interests. Participants identified increased opportunities for extracurricular involvement as a primary motivation for choosing homeschooling.

Personalized Curriculum

Regarding curriculum preferences, the analysis revealed that all participants expressed interest in a customizable learning approach. Anthony and Wildmon (2023) found homeschool families create customized curricula tailored to children's interests and needs, enhancing engagement and performance. This study confirmed these findings, with participants emphasizing the importance of flexibility in curriculum selection and implementation. While all

participants expressed interest in a core curriculum comprising mathematics, language arts, and science, their preferred methods of implementation varied. All participants preferred greater scheduling flexibility, including customizable subject selection per term, adaptable attendance days each week, options for virtual or in-person learning based on individual needs, and flexible hours and pacing, which are not typically available in traditional public schools. Studies show that homeschooling enables parents to quickly address their children's academic needs, leading to greater family satisfaction.

Many choose homeschooling after finding traditional schools inadequate, especially in terms of curriculum and acceleration opportunities (Matthews et al., 2024). Eight participants in this study expressed a preference for access to college-level (AP) courses, as well as coding and computer technology courses, to earn college credits and industry certifications. Faith studies were identified as a subject that some parents prefer to see incorporated into the curriculum. For families who place importance on fostering a religious bond, homeschooling offers an opportunity to shape their children's faith by integrating materials on God and the Bible (Bodah, 2022). Nine participants suggested that history be included in the core curriculum, while additional subjects such as engineering, geography, home economics, foreign languages, physical education, art, and music were also proposed. Further, several participants recommended incorporating business and personal finance literacy courses.

Support Services Desired

Regarding desired program elements and support services, this study revealed that all participants desired at least one program to support social and emotional development. Cheng and Hamlin (2023) found approximately two-thirds of homeschooling families use supplemental services, with more than half engaging private tutors or cooperatives. This study's findings align

with this pattern, as participants consistently identified tutoring (11 of 15 participants) and specialized support services as key needs.

Tutoring, whether one-on-one or in small groups, emerged as the primary area of need among 11 participants. Five respondents expressed interest in supporting college-preparatory and AP courses. Many homeschooling families find traditional schools inadequate in providing opportunities for acceleration (Matthews et al., 2024). Three specifically requested guidance on the curriculum. Two participants identified a need for a career pathway and college counseling. Recent studies indicate that many homeschoolers face challenges in accessing structured college and career guidance. Contos and Tadros (2022) found that homeschooled families often feel inadequately prepared for postsecondary planning, including navigating college admissions, financial aid, and application procedures. Offering support for transitions to higher education and career advising, while accommodating the unique requirements of homeschooling families, is highly desired (Conejeros-Solar & Smith, 2021).

Participants also highlighted the need for assistance with mandatory annual county evaluations, registration for standardized tests such as the PSAT or AP exams, access to books and technology, and sourcing suitable curricula. George and Siranchuk (2025) found that public-private partnerships can enhance educational equity by expanding access to high-quality resources for homeschooled students, particularly for underserved populations. Participants in this study echoed this need, highlighting the importance of assistance with county evaluations, standardized test registration, and access to books and technology. Three participants emphasized the importance of providing homeschool students with opportunities for socialization and emotional support through either in-person or virtual counseling services. Counselors play a role in supporting homeschooling families by providing essential resources, addressing social-

emotional and mental health concerns, and guiding students through transitional phases (Contos & Tadros, 2022). Consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, emphasizing emotional and psychological well-being as essential foundations for academic growth, recent research demonstrates that SEL correlates positively with student achievement (de Bruijn et al., 2025). Seven respondents expressed interest in academic competitions, while others preferred extracurricular activities. The research findings suggest that, in line with Maslow's theoretical framework, a holistic approach to homeschooling that integrates SEL with academic instruction is essential for promoting students' development.

Disappointments and Challenges

Unger Madar and BenDavid-Hadar (2022) argued homeschooling may isolate children from mainstream society, limit opportunities for social interaction and learning found in conventional schools, and could negatively impact their social development, academic achievement, and prospects. However, none of the participants expressed regret regarding their decision to homeschool, and six participants described it as the most beneficial choice they had made for their children's education. While most acknowledged that challenges existed, they generally viewed these obstacles as being outweighed by the advantages. The findings suggest that homeschooling facilitates flexible implementation of character values, thereby fostering the development of empathy, responsibility, and social skills among children (Ayu & Lestari, 2024). Homeschool families have the flexibility to create a custom curriculum tailored to each student's needs and interests, which can increase engagement and support academic success (Anthony & Wildmon, 2023).

Participants who worked noted balancing teaching responsibilities, household duties, and employment was particularly demanding. Jesus (2025) found that homeschooling parents

struggle with managing their roles as teachers, caregivers, and emotional supporters. Some participants reported financial strain due to expenses for microschool classes, tutoring, and extracurricular activities, as well as social pressure from those who did not understand their decision to homeschool and expressed criticism and disapproval. This finding is consistent with those of Gray and Riley (2013). Selecting suitable curricula posed challenges for some families, as noted by Bodah (2022).

The interpretations and conclusions presented in this study are limited to the data obtained from the 15 homeschooling families in South Florida who participated. All inferences are derived from participant responses and do not extend beyond the parameters of this qualitative inquiry. The conclusions reflect the perspectives of these participants and should be understood in the context of this specific population and geographic region.

Limitations

A small sample size may restrict the extent to which qualitative research findings can be generalized (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This study was limited to 15 participants from South Florida homeschooling families, recruited through purposive sampling, and relied on a single instrument, an online questionnaire. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce recall and social desirability biases (Creswell & Poth, 2024). To address these limitations and enhance trustworthiness, several strategies were implemented. Credibility was strengthened through SME review of the questionnaire and member checking, in which participants verified their responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Dependability was established through an audit trail documenting the research design, procedures, and analysis, along with a reflexive journal to minimize bias during coding (Coleman, 2022; Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). Confirmability was achieved through objective analysis grounded in participants' authentic responses, using Miles and Huberman's

(1994) systematic data reduction approach. Participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality to promote honest responses.

Regarding transferability, this study used purposeful sampling to provide detailed descriptions (Mulisa, 2022b). The research context, South Florida school districts experiencing enrollment declines and financial pressures, may limit applicability. Results may be transferable to other large urban districts facing similar enrollment challenges and implementing state-sponsored scholarship voucher programs. This study may not apply to districts without voucher programs, those without under-enrollment issues, or those with small homeschooling populations.

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative study provided comprehensive insights into the perceived needs of homeschooling families. Based on these findings, three primary recommendations emerge for future research and practice. First, future research should investigate flexible educational models that bridge homeschooling and traditional schooling. This study found all 15 participants valued flexibility in scheduling, curriculum selection, and learning modality (virtual vs. in-person). Participants consistently emphasized the importance of options that are “optional and non-intrusive” while providing access to public school resources. Future studies should examine hybrid models that allow students to participate part-time in traditional schools while maintaining homeschool flexibility. Longitudinal research tracking student outcomes in such hybrid arrangements would help clarify the relationship between instructional flexibility and academic achievement. Mixed-methods approaches examining both quantitative outcomes and qualitative family experiences would strengthen the evidence base for program development.

Second, school districts should establish dedicated support structures for homeschooling families. Eleven of 15 participants identified tutoring as a primary need, and participants consistently requested assistance with annual evaluations, standardized test registration, and college counseling. Based on these findings, districts should establish dedicated liaison positions to bridge communication gaps with homeschooling families. Districts should also develop clear guidance documents to support families during annual evaluations and standardized testing requirements. These structural supports would address the specific needs identified by participants while respecting family autonomy.

Third, future research should explore homeschooling support needs across diverse populations and contexts. This study was limited to 15 families in South Florida. Future studies should include larger, more diverse samples across regions, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational approaches. Specific attention should be given to underrepresented groups, including minorities, English language learners, and students with disabilities, to assess whether their needs differ from those identified in this study. Comparative analyses of rural, suburban, and urban contexts would be helpful given the differences in resource access across these settings.

Implications for Leadership

The findings of this qualitative study highlight important considerations for educational leadership in public education systems and policy, particularly as they intersect with homeschooling communities. As the homeschooling population becomes more diverse and widespread, leaders must recognize its legitimacy as a viable educational option. This necessitates shifting from traditional, school-focused leadership models toward more inclusive and adaptive approaches that address the unique needs of homeschoolers.

This study found that all 15 participants emphasized the importance of flexibility, personalized learning, and responsiveness to students' interests and developmental stages. Specifically, participants requested customizable subject selection, adaptable attendance options, and flexible pacing, features not typically available in traditional public schools. In response to these specific findings, leaders should advance policies that prioritize individual learner needs over standardized instructional models by supporting flexible scheduling, competency-based learning, and differentiated pathways. The study also revealed strong interest among homeschool families in accessing public school resources. Specifically, participants identified desires for specialized courses, extracurricular activities, counseling services, and college/career advising (RQ3 findings). To address these needs, leaders can facilitate partnerships by expanding access to shared services, including libraries, laboratories, career and technical education, and extracurricular programs, while preserving the family autonomy that participants consistently emphasized. Recognizing homeschoolers as valued stakeholders can strengthen trust and reduce tensions between home-based and traditional educational systems.

The study further indicated that homeschool families often navigate regulatory environments with inconsistent guidance and support. Districts should ensure that policies governing homeschooling are transparent, equitable, and clearly communicated. By promoting policy clarity, flexible compliance structures, and fair access to publicly funded resources, leaders can reduce barriers and improve engagement between homeschool families and educational agencies. Leadership focused on policy literacy and responsiveness can help align regulatory practices with the needs of homeschool families.

Findings suggested limited staff knowledge of homeschooling practices can hinder effective support for homeschool students. Leaders should prioritize professional development

for teachers, counselors, and administrators focused on homeschooling models, learner variability, and nontraditional educational trajectories. Building capacity in these areas equips educators to better support homeschool students transitioning into or out of traditional settings, promotes empathy, and enhances the quality of services provided.

When working with homeschooling populations, leaders must demonstrate respect for family values, cultural diversity, and parental authority while maintaining a commitment to student well-being and educational quality. Relational leadership, characterized by listening, mutual respect, and shared decision-making, emerged as essential for effectively addressing the needs of homeschoolers. Leaders who engage families as partners rather than subjects of oversight are more likely to create sustainable and supportive educational ecosystems.

Implications for leadership extend beyond administrative decision-making to encompass advocacy, collaboration, adaptability, and ethical responsibility. Educational leaders who acknowledge and respond to the unique needs of homeschoolers are better positioned to support diverse learning communities and promote equitable access to educational opportunities. The findings of this study demonstrate the need for inclusive, learner-centered leadership models that are responsive to families' needs.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored the educational, social, and structural needs of homeschooling families, drawing on insights from those directly involved in homeschooling. The findings reveal that homeschooling is a highly individualized approach to education, shaped by diverse family motivations, specific learner needs, and unique contexts, rather than standardized practices. Participants consistently identified flexibility, personalized instruction, and congruence with family values as principal benefits of homeschooling. Nonetheless, they

acknowledged persistent challenges, including limited access to resources, opportunities for social engagement, and external support mechanisms.

The findings suggest that homeschoolers require specialized, adaptable instructional materials, as well as meaningful opportunities for social engagement through community-based and extracurricular settings. Access to collaborative learning environments and external resources emerged as central to both academic and social development. The study also emphasized the role of leadership at the institutional, community, and policy levels in addressing the needs of homeschoolers. Participants identified the need for clear regulations, equitable access to educational resources, and informed leadership that acknowledges homeschooling as a legitimate and diverse educational pathway.

This research contributes a new understanding of homeschoolers' preferences for curriculum and program elements within homeschooling programs. By centering the voices and needs of homeschooling participants, this study advances the homeschooling literature and translates participant perspectives into actionable implications. The resulting findings provide a research-informed foundation for leadership practice, policy development, and future inquiry that supports homeschooling as a viable, equitable, and educational pathway across diverse contexts.

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Appendix A**Site Permission Request**

My name is Sug Chan, and I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education (ACE). I am writing to request permission to conduct an online questionnaire. This information will be used for my dissertation research on Schools Without Walls: A Basic Qualitative Study to Explore What South Florida Homeschoolers Desire in a Homeschooling Program. The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida on why they choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire.

15–20 participants will be needed for this study.

Principal Investigator: Sug Chan

E-mail: sug.chan4590@my.ace.edu

Phone: [REDACTED]

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Tiffani Bateman

E-mail: Tiffani.Bateman@ace.edu

If you permit me to recruit participants from your group of homeschooling parents, please reply to this email with your approval.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and prompt response. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request. If further verification is needed, please email the Doctoral Research

Department at DRR@ace.edu

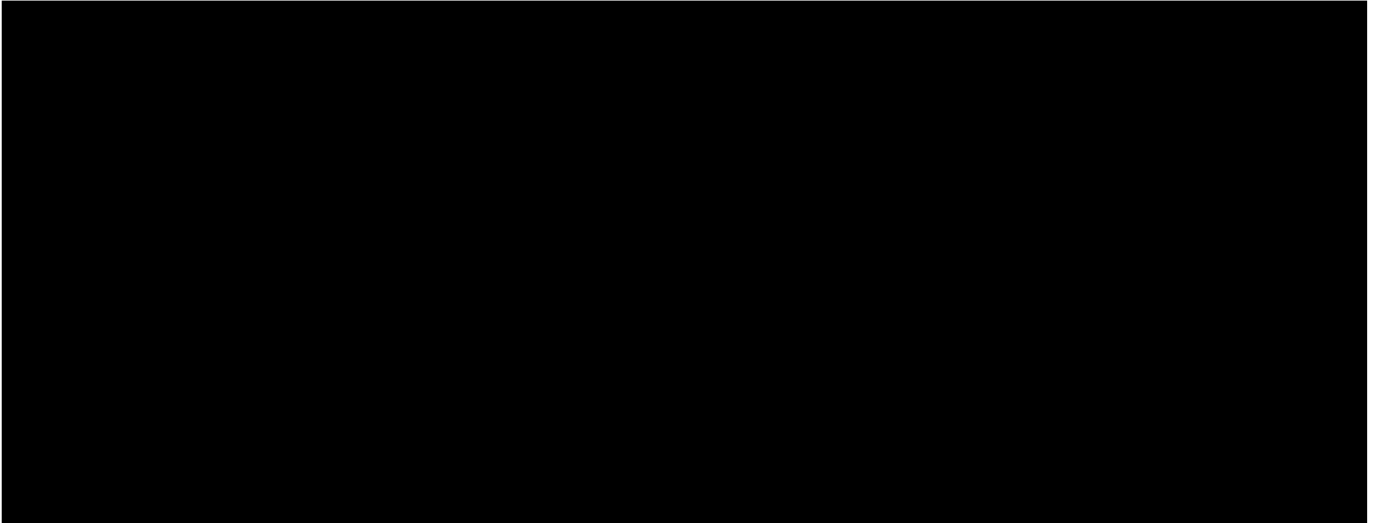
Regards,

Sug Chan, Doctoral Candidate

American College Of Education

Appendix B

Site Permission Approval



January 18, 2025

Dear Sug Chan,

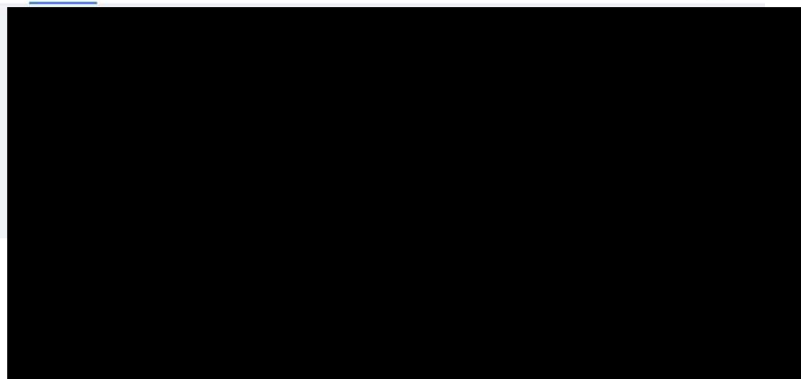
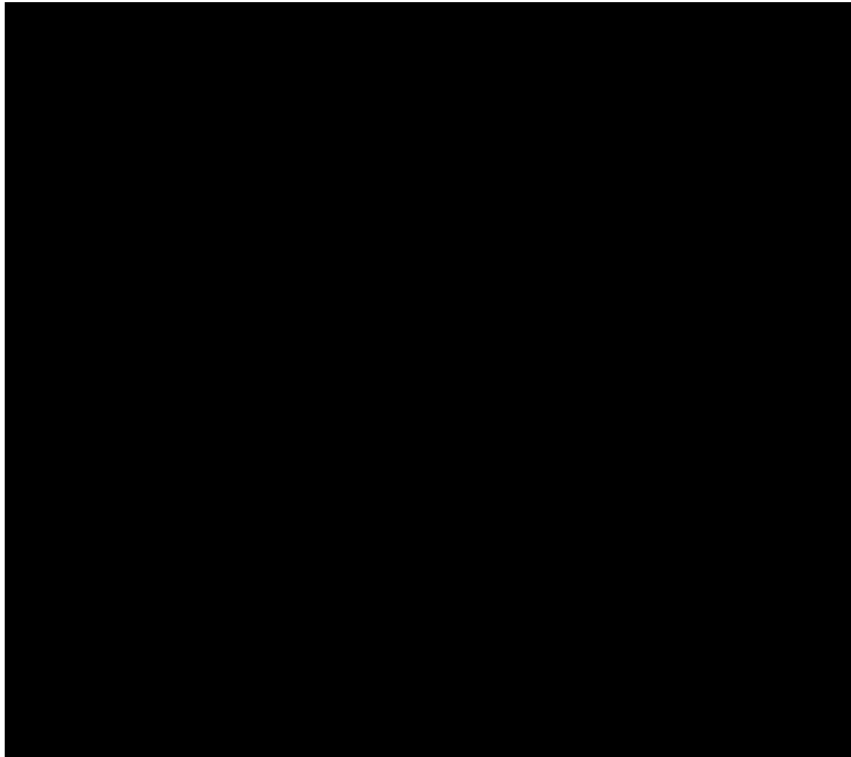
This letter is in response to your site permission request letter.

We approve your request to recruit [REDACTED] members to participate in your research study on parents' homeschooling of their children. We will help provide you with 15 parent participants. Please let me know when you need emails for them to complete the survey you are preparing.

Please let us know if you need further assistance.

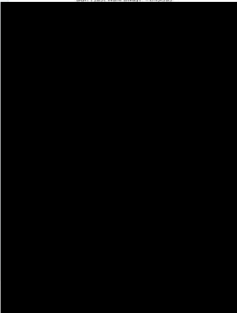
Regards,

[REDACTED]



Intro

"When the world puts something that obvious in front of you, you don't just walk away." - Aristotle



Posts

Filters



Fun Environment
Flexibility in Teaching What You Want
See more

WE'RE HIRING
JOIN OUR TEAM



Appendix C**IRB Approval**

August 28, 2025

To : Sug Chan
Tiffani Bateman, Dissertation Committee Chair

From : Institutional Review Board
American College of Education

Re: IRB Approval

"Exploring South Florida Homeschoolers' Desires for Public Homeschooling Programs: A Basic Qualitative Study"

The American College of Education IRB has reviewed your application, proposal, and any related materials. We have determined that your research provides sufficient protection of human subjects.

Your research is therefore approved to proceed. The expiration date for this IRB approval is one year from the date of review completion, August 28, 2026. If you would like to continue your research beyond this point, including data collection and/or analysis of private data, you must submit a renewal request to the IRB.

Candidates are prohibited from collecting data or interacting with participants if they are not actively enrolled in a dissertation sequence course (RES6521, RES6531, RES6541, RES6600, RES6551, RES6561, RES6302) and under the supervision of their dissertation chair.

Our best to you as you continue your studies.

Sincerely,

Jeff Roach
American College of Education

Appendix D

Social Media Message

Social Media Message

📢 Attention South Florida Homeschooling Families! 📢

Are you currently homeschooling or planning to homeschool your child? I'm conducting a research study to explore why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum, activities, and services they value in a homeschooling program. Your insights can help shape future homeschool resources!

📄 Participation is simple! **After reviewing an informed consent form and completing a short eligibility screener**, you'll be directed to a 15-question questionnaire, which takes approximately 25–35 minutes at your convenience.

🔗 Click here to participate: <https://forms.gle/WzPKM87aUK94wLqh7>

📱 Or scan the QR code attached to this post!

Thank you for your time and support! Feel free to share with other homeschool families who may be interested. 💡 #Homeschooling #ResearchStudy #SouthFloridaHomeschoolers



Appendix E**Informed Consent**

<https://forms.gle/2jifZ4E89Zqu6wTn7>

Informed Consent and Demographic Screener

Schools Without Walls: A Basic Qualitative Study to Explore What South Florida Homeschoolers Desire in a Homeschooling Program

Prospective Research Participant:

Please read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether or not you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

Project Information

Project Title:

Schools Without Walls: A Basic Qualitative Study to Explore What South Florida Homeschoolers Desire in a Homeschooling Program

Researcher

Sug Chan

American College of Education

Email: sug.chan4590@my.ace.edu

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Organization Names for Researchers

American College of Education

Introduction

I am Sug Chan, and I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Tiffani Bateman, chairperson of my dissertation committee. I will give you some information about the project and invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please contact me, and I will explain to you in detail and answer any questions you may have. If you have questions later, you can ask them then.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore why South Florida families homeschool their children and what curriculum, activities, and services homeschoolers desire in a homeschooling program.

Method of Data Collection

A questionnaire will be emailed to participants and completed online at your convenience. It is estimated to take 25–35 minutes.

The study will involve 15–20 participants.

Participant Selection

You are invited to participate if you are a family living in South Florida and have a student who is enrolled or plans to enroll as a homeschooler.

Voluntary Participation

Participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without repercussions. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

We are asking you to help us learn more about why South Florida families homeschool their children and what curriculum, activities, and services homeschoolers desire in a homeschooling program. If you accept, you will be asked to complete an online form at your convenience. It is estimated to take 25–35 minutes.

Duration

This research requires participants to complete a voluntary questionnaire, which will be emailed to participants and completed online at your convenience. It is estimated to take 25–35 minutes.

Risks

We are asking you to share personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any questions or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

Benefits

While there will be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation may help inform future homeschool programs about the specific factors driving decisions to homeschool and the curriculum and program elements homeschooling families prioritize.

Confidentiality

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside the research team. The information we collect will be stored securely in a locked, password-protected computer. I will use a pseudonym instead of your name. Only I will know your pseudonym, and I will secure that information.

Sharing the Results

Each participant will receive a summary of the research findings. I hope to publish the results so that other interested people may learn from the research.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without repercussions. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact Sug Chan at sug.chan4590@my.ace.edu. This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ace.edu.

Certificate of Consent

I have read the information about this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Consent *☐ Yes☐ No**Name ***

Your answer _____

Appendix F**Demographic Screener**

Informed Consent and Demographic Screener

* Indicates required question

Demographic Screener

Do you reside in South Florida? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you currently homeschool your child or plan to homeschool? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

[Back](#) [Next](#) [Clear form](#)

Appendix G

Initial Questions for Questionnaire

Homeschooling Program Survey Questionnaire

1. What are your main reasons for homeschooling?
2. What are your goals as a homeschooler? Explain how you can better achieve your goals as a homeschooler.
3. What are the sources of your instructional materials, contents, and equipment? Examples are libraries, bookstores, educational websites, and computer stores.
4. Where do you get homeschooling support and services, and what kind do you receive?
For example, public schools, micro-schools, coop learning centers, homeschooling groups, and churches offer support and services to homeschoolers.
5. If field trips are available, Where would you like to visit: parks, museums, aquariums, zoos, botanical gardens, or others? How many field trips a year, and at what reasonable cost do you think? Would you like local or long-distance field trips?
6. What core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program, for example, math, science, language arts, social science, advanced placement classes, dual enrollment, accelerated curriculum, and others? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both?
Can you elaborate?
7. What non-core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program, for example, drama, music, art, foreign language, and others? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?

8. Would you like to earn industry certifications in coding, nursing, dental, or other fields by taking technical courses offered by the homeschooling program? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?
9. What extracurricular activities would you desire in a homeschooling program? For example, you can choose from sports, clubs, community service, internships, and other activities that help you grow outside of school.
10. What services, such as counseling, social service, tutoring, etc., would you desire to have in a homeschooling program? Do you need in-person service, virtual, or both? Can you elaborate?
11. Would you like to participate in an academic competitions? Some examples of academic competitions include math, science, writing contests, programming, spelling bees, the National History Bowl, and others.
12. Please describe any support and accommodation you need, including access to books or instructional content, assistive technology, or access to computer software, equipment, and the Internet.
13. What are the biggest challenges you face as a homeschooler?
14. What are the most significant disappointments about homeschooling?

Appendix H**SME Request Letter and Responses*****SME Request Letter***

Dear SME,

My name is Sug Chan, and I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education. I am planning to conduct a basic qualitative study to explore the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire among homeschooling families in South Florida. The problem for my study is the limited understanding of why families choose homeschooling and what curriculum and program elements they desire among homeschooling families in South Florida and the guiding research questions are:

Research Question 1:

What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding the factors influencing their decision to homeschool?

Research Question 2:

What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for curriculum in a homeschooling program?

Research Question 3:

What are the perceptions of homeschooling families in South Florida regarding their preferences for program elements in a homeschooling program?

I am requesting your assistance as a subject matter expert on Homeschooling to help validate and provide feedback on the questions I developed for my participants. Your review and responses will be used to modify my instrument as needed and will provide credibility to my research instrument(s).

Below are my research questions for the participants. Please review and reply with any suggestions. If possible, I would appreciate your feedback via email as soon as possible.

If you cannot complete it within the week, please let me know.

If you cannot participate as a subject matter expert, please let me know. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sug Chan

Homeschooling Program Survey Questionnaire

1. What are your main reasons for homeschooling?
2. What are your goals as a homeschooler? Explain how you can better achieve your goals as a homeschooler.
3. What are the sources of your instructional materials, contents, and equipment? Examples are libraries, bookstores, educational websites, and computer stores.
4. Where do you get homeschooling support and services, and what kind do you receive?
For example, public schools, micro-schools, coop learning centers, homeschooling groups, and churches offer support and services to homeschoolers.
5. If field trips are available, Where would you like to visit: parks, museums, aquariums, zoos, botanical gardens, or others? How many field trips a year, and at what reasonable cost do you think? Would you like local or long-distance field trips?
6. What core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program, for example, math, science, language arts, social science, advanced placement classes, dual enrollment, accelerated curriculum, and others? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both?
Can you elaborate?
7. What non-core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program, for example, drama, music, art, foreign language, and others? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?
8. Would you like to earn industry certifications in coding, nursing, dental, or other fields by taking technical courses offered by the homeschooling program? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?

9. What extracurricular activities would you desire in a homeschooling program? For example, you can choose from sports, clubs, community service, internships, and other activities that help you grow outside of school.
10. What services, such as counseling, social service, tutoring, etc., would you desire to have in a homeschooling program? Do you need in-person service, virtual, or both? Can you elaborate?
11. Would you like to participate in an academic competitions? Some examples of academic competitions include math, science, writing contests, programming, spelling bees, the National History Bowl, and others.
12. Please describe any support and accommodation you need, including access to books or instructional content, assistive technology, or access to computer software, equipment, and the Internet.
13. What are the biggest challenges you face as a homeschooler?
14. What are the most significant disappointments about homeschooling?

SME #1 Feedback

Subject: RE: SME Request

Please be cautious
This email originated from outside of ACE organization

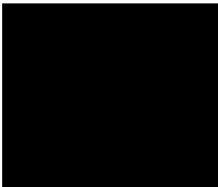
Mr. Chan,

Your proposed research is interesting and I believe your questions will help to address your research questions. My feedback is to ask one question at a time to allow participants to give adequate responses. For example, "What non-core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program, for example, drama, music, art, foreign language, and others? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?"

Ask the first question, allow a response, and use the following two questions as probing items. Also, question 11: Make sure it is open-ended, perhaps by asking "Which academic competitions interest you and why?" Of course, give examples as needed.

Best of luck to you and reach out for any further help!

Respectfully,



SME #2 Feedback

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 7, 2025 9:45 PM
To: Sug Chan <sug.chan4590@my.ace.edu>
Subject: Re: SME Request

Please be cautious
This email originated from outside of ACE organization

Dear Sug,

Thank you for reaching out and considering me as a subject matter expert for your study on homeschooling in South Florida. I appreciate the opportunity to review your questionnaire, and I have provided detailed feedback below to help refine your instrument.

General Feedback:

Your questions address a wide range of important aspects of homeschooling. However, some could benefit from clarification or a more specific focus to ensure participants provide detailed and relevant responses. Additionally, because you are conducting qualitative research, referring to this as a questionnaire is more appropriate than calling it a survey, as it aligns with the open-ended and exploratory nature of your study.

Specific Feedback on Questions:

1. What are your main reasons for homeschooling?
This is clear and essential. Consider including examples such as religious beliefs, dissatisfaction with traditional schools, or the desire for flexibility to prompt more detailed responses.
2. What are your goals as a homeschooler? Explain how you can better achieve your goals as a homeschooler.
This could be split into two questions for greater clarity: one focusing on the goals and another on strategies or resources that could help achieve those goals.
3. What are the sources of your instructional materials, contents, and equipment? Examples are libraries, bookstores, educational websites, and computer stores.
This question is comprehensive. Adding a follow-up about which sources are most effective or preferred could yield richer data.
4. Where do you get homeschooling support and services, and what kind do you receive? For example, public schools, micro-schools, co-op learning centers, homeschooling groups, and churches offer support and services to homeschoolers.
This is a strong question. Consider adding a prompt about what additional support or services participants might find valuable.
5. If field trips are available, where would you like to visit: parks, museums, aquariums, zoos, botanical gardens, or others? How many field trips a year, and at what reasonable cost do you think? Would you like local or long-distance field trips?
This is a multi-part question that may benefit from being divided into smaller, more focused ones. For example, you could ask about preferred types of field trips, desired frequency, and reasonable costs separately.
6. What core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?
This is well-constructed. Adding a question about challenges in accessing the desired core curriculum could provide more insight.
7. What non-core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?
Similar to the previous question, this is clear. Including a prompt about barriers to accessing non-core curriculum might enhance the data collected.
8. Would you like to earn industry certifications in coding, nursing, dental, or other fields by taking technical courses offered by the homeschooling program? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?
This is an excellent question but could be more specific. Asking what certifications interest participants most and why might elicit more detailed responses.
9. What extracurricular activities would you desire in a homeschooling program? For example, sports, clubs, community service, internships, and other activities that help you grow outside of school.
This is clear and focused. Adding examples of unique extracurricular options could inspire diverse responses.

10. What services, such as counseling, social service, tutoring, etc., would you desire to have in a homeschooling program? Do you need in-person service, virtual, or both? Can you elaborate?
This is well-constructed. Adding a question about which services they currently access and the challenges faced in doing so might provide deeper insights.

11. Would you like to participate in an academic competition? Some examples of academic competitions include math, science, writing contests, programming, spelling bees, the National History Bowl, and others.
This is clear. Consider asking about previous participation and experiences with academic competitions to provide context.

12. Please describe any support and accommodation you need, including access to books or instructional content, assistive technology, or access to computer software, equipment, and the Internet.
This is critical and well-worded. Ensure participants can elaborate on specific challenges, such as technology access or learning disabilities.

13. What are the biggest challenges you face as a homeschooler?
This is comprehensive. Adding a follow-up question about how they address these challenges might provide richer data.

14. What are the most significant disappointments about homeschooling?
This is an insightful question. You might also ask how these disappointments have influenced participants' homeschooling experience or decisions.

I hope this feedback helps refine your questionnaire and enhances your study's data collection process. Please let me know if you need further assistance or clarification.



SME #3 Feedback

[REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2025 8:41 AM
To: Sug Chan <sug.chan4590@my.ace.edu>
Subject: Re: sme

Please be cautious
This email originated from outside of ACE organization

[REDACTED]
January 27, 2025

Subject: Comments for Survey Questions

Dear Mr. Chan,

I am honored to be your SME and participate in your research. I trust your research will generate constructive and invaluable insights into building programs to benefit homeschoolers.

Below are my comments, with minor suggested changes, for your consideration.

Best of luck with you project; look forward to reading your final results.

Best Wishes,

[REDACTED]
Homeschooling Program Survey Questionnaire

1. What are your main reasons for homeschooling, instead of public school, charter school, private school, or others?
2. What are your goals as a homeschooler? Explain how you can better achieve your goals as a homeschooler.
3. Where do you get your instructional materials, contents, and equipment? Examples are libraries, bookstores, educational websites, and computer stores, supporting groups, friends, or others.
4. Where do you get homeschooling support and services? For example, public schools, micro-schools, coop learning centers, homeschooling groups, and churches that offer support to homeschoolers.
5. If field trips are available, where would you like to visit: parks, museums, aquariums, ball games, zoos, botanical gardens, or others? How many field trips a year, and at what you think is reasonable? Would you like local or long-distance field trips?

6. What core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program; for example, math, science, language arts, social science, advanced placement classes, dual enrollment, accelerated curriculum, and others? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or hybrid? Can you elaborate?

7. What non-core curriculum do you desire in a homeschooling program. For example, drama, music, art, foreign language, PE, performing arts, tutorial class for SAT etc., and others? Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or hybrid? Can you elaborate?

8. Would you like to earn industry certifications in coding, nursing, dental, or other vocational education by taking technical courses offered by the homeschooling program?

Do you take the courses in person, virtually, or both? Can you elaborate?

9. What extracurricular activities would you desire in a homeschooling program? For example, you can choose from sports, clubs, community service, internships, and other activities that can help you grow outside of school.

10. What additional services, such as counseling, social service, tutoring, etc., would you desire to have in a homeschooling program? Do you need in-person service, virtual, or hybrid? Can you elaborate?

11. Would you like to participate or volunteer in an academic competition? Some examples of academic competitions may include math, science, writing contests, computer programming, technology, spelling bees, the National History Bowl, and others.

12. Please describe any support and accommodation you need, including access to books or instructional content, assistive technology, or access to computer software, equipment, and the Internet.

13. What are the biggest challenges you face as a homeschooler? Such as level of difficulties, time needed to complete a task, and answers for follow up questions.

14. What are the most significant disappointments about homeschooling? Are you happy or unhappy with homeschooling? Why?

15. Do you have any other comments?

|

Appendix I**Revised Questions from SME Feedback**

Informed Consent and Demographic Screener

* Indicates required question

Open-ended Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. You meet the inclusion criteria to participate. Please allow 25-35 minutes to complete the 15 question questionnaire.

1. How long have you been homeschooling your child(ren)? *

- ☐ Will begin homeschooling in 2025-26
- ☐ 0-1 years
- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ 5+ years

2. What are your main reasons for homeschooling? Please share your reasons for choosing homeschooling. Some common reasons include religious beliefs, dissatisfaction with traditional schools, the desire for flexibility, or other personal factors.

Your answer _____

3. What are your goals as a homeschooler; what do you hope to achieve through homeschooling?

Your answer _____

4. Where do you find support for homeschooling? (e.g., homeschool groups, co-ops, online communities)

Your answer _____

5. What types of field trips do you participate in or wish were available?

Your answer _____

6. What subjects do you include in your core curriculum? (e.g., math, science, history, language arts)

Your answer _____

7. Would you be interested in industry certifications for your child? If so, in what fields? (e.g., coding, healthcare, trades)

Your answer _____

8. What support services would be helpful for your homeschooling experience? (e.g., tutoring, counseling, college prep)

Your answer _____

9. Has your child participated in academic competitions? If not, would you be interested in them?

Your answer _____

10. What are the biggest challenges you face as a homeschooling parent?

Your answer _____

11. What, if anything, has been disappointing or unexpected about homeschooling?

Your answer _____

12. What services, such as counseling, social service, tutoring, etc., would you desire to have in a homeschooling program? Do you need in-person service, virtual, or both? Can you elaborate?

Your answer

13. Please describe any support and accommodation you need, including access to books or instructional content, assistive technology, or access to computer software, equipment, and the Internet.

Your answer

14. What advice would you give to new homeschooling parents?

Your answer

15. What are the age(s) of your child(ren)?

Your answer

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

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