

The Inspiring Front Lines of the 20th-Century Homeschool Revolution

When she was a young girl, [Sandra Day O'Connor](#) began her education at home. Her early years of schooling on an Arizona ranch were sitting at the kitchen table with her mother, learning to read, and taking long nature walks.

I read this, and this scene of serenity, this future Supreme Court Justice, beginning her education at home, formed an image in my mind of what might be possible.

From [Thomas Edison to Teddy Roosevelt to Serena Williams](#), [homeschooling](#) has gone from a faint glimmer to a narrow but shining spotlight in education.

Deciding to homeschool my four daughters was formed in a group setting, as I was surrounded by brilliant friends, and resilience and passion were our common denominators. It was the 1980s, where a yet-unknown boom was about to take place, and we were on the front lines.

Over 30 years ago I entered this very particular land of tutorage with four little girls in tow. At the beginning, my reasons for schooling my daughters at home were not profound. We lived in Chicago, and at this particular time, satellite schools, robust in education, did not exist.

Several of my girlfriends and I decided we would miss our kids and were not ready for them to be away from us all day. We also felt that kindergarten was possible in our capable hands with the various college degrees among us. We plunged in and designed curricula for 5-year-olds.

There were 10 children between the three of us moms, and it

was a blast. From [Teach Your Child To Read in 100 Easy Lessons](#) to [A Child's History of the World](#) to drawn-upon timelines wrapping the walls to the constant memorization of addition and subtraction tables, we felt strong and mighty in our determination.

We added to this mix with music lessons in piano, violin, and voice—and the absolute requirement of sport, whether ballet, swimming, tennis, gymnastics, or even roller skating along the sidewalks.

At a time when homeschoolers were leading the nascent fight for educational freedom, we descended on the Illinois Capitol with cherry pies to raise awareness for homeschooling, and this [Cherry Pie Day](#) homeschool advocacy event still continues annually. We formed a support group titled C.U.B.S. ([Christians United for Better Schools](#)). We protested the Chicago Public School system and held signs asking for the Department of Education to be abolished.

This was the decade of defending homeschooling from the distractors who wanted us arrested. [Homeschoolers](#) in Chicago faced harassment from school officials for their choices, and only a few decades prior, in 1950, an Illinois couple had to go to court to [overturn their arrest and conviction](#) for homeschooling their children.

We homeschool families braved the battle with scythe in hand. We formed paths for those to follow and discovered that the path was already there. We were relentless in our defense for what we knew was our right, and in 1993, all 50 states [legally recognized](#) homeschooling as a viable option for the education of children.

In the meantime, our homeschooling days and years unfolded with a combination of mystery and discovery. The mystery was based squarely in the desire to look at everything with an open mind of learning. When I asked my eldest what she gained

from these years, she told me she received a lifelong love of learning. Is not this the goal of all childhood education?

Tutoring and teaching a young life is about far more than mathematics. It is about the sensibilities around the multiplication tables and the essay questions about the origins of the universe. It is about behavior and ethics and morality.

Now, all four of my daughters have attended colleges—from Hillsdale College to the University of Chicago and the Pritzker School of Medicine—where bright minds abounded. One of my daughters is a surgeon; another is a graphic designer who climbs literal mountains with her husband; another attended Butler University and Drake University, is now a mother, and works in fitness; and another interned at the Heritage Foundation, worked at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, before settling at World Vision International.

Whatever the reason for lifting education on wings of eagles and plopping it securely at the kitchen table, the joy of watching your offspring sprout up into adults who know and do far more than you do is the ultimate reward.

And this is what has made the fight for homeschool, in the end, worth it.

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