

## What do Homeschoolers do after Graduation?

By Dr. Howard Richman

[This article first appeared in Issue 66 (Spring 1999) of the *PA Homeschoolers* newsletter.]

Will homeschool graduates change the world as many homeschool advocates hope? Or will homeschool failures end up on welfare or in jail as a public school principal recently predicted in a national magazine?

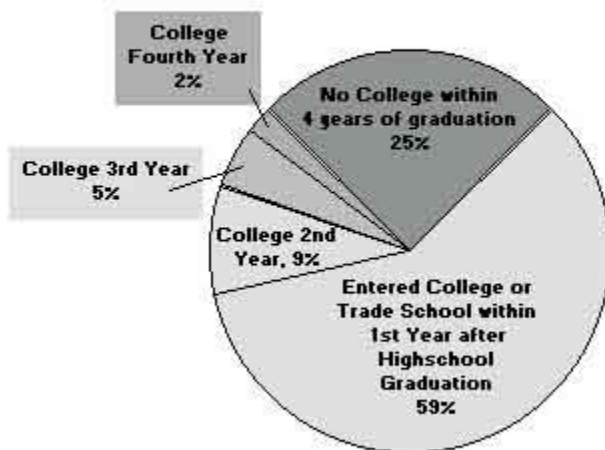
The answers to these questions may not be known for some time. However, the results of our largest survey of homeschool graduates, so far, suggest that they are on the path toward success, not failure.

Just before Christmas we sent out surveys to the parents of the 839 homeschoolers who graduated with PHAA (PA Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency) diplomas from 1991 through 1998. At press time we had received 352 of these back. In addition to asking the parents what their children had done during each school year since graduation, we also asked them if they had any advice to share with other homeschooling parents. Here's what we found out...

### How many go to College?

While there have been earlier surveys showing that half of homeschool graduates go to college immediately after graduation, this is the first of our surveys to follow up and determine how many go to college over the four years after graduation. Turns out that 3/4ths of the homeschool graduates go to college or trade school during their first 4 years after graduation. About 10% of these attended trade schools and the other 90% attended colleges.

### When our Graduates go to College or Trade School

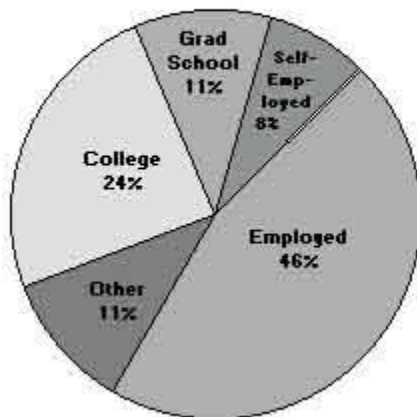


## Where are the Older Grads Now?

Previous surveys have shown what those just out of high school do; this is our first survey with enough older graduates to give us an idea of what those who graduated more than four years ago are doing. We had responses to our survey by the parents of 37 of those who graduated from 1991 through 1994.

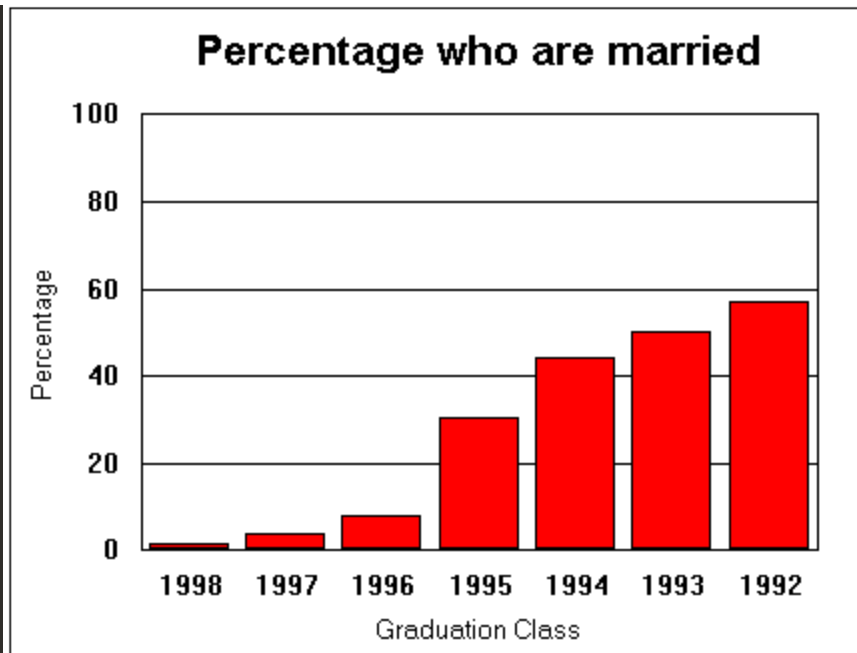
- 9 (24%) are still attending college at the undergraduate level.
- 4 (11%) are in graduate school (studying macrobiology, elementary education, engineering, and medicine).
- 3 (8%) are self-employed. One is in partnership with his father in a family construction business, one is in a worship band, and the other started her own house-cleaning business and has to turn away work because of being so in demand.
- 17 (46%) are working for others. These include a staff assistant for Senator Rick Santorum, a lightroom controller at Sight and Sound Theater, a research analyst for the PA State Association of Township Supervisors, an elementary teacher, an ordering clerk, a computer analyst, two mechanics, a maintenance person who was just promoted to supervisor, a cosmetologist who is also starting her own cosmetology business, a carpenter, an overhead-door installer, and a soldier in the Air Force.
- The other 4 (11%) are all women. One is a homemaker who got married in '97 and now has a new baby girl, one is a missionary and student traveling in England, and the other two just graduated from college.

## What Older Grads are Doing



## When do they get Married?

This is the first survey with enough older graduates to get an idea of when homeschoolers get married. The graph below shows the number of students in each of PHAA's graduation classes who are now married. It appears that very few of the graduates of 1996, 1997, and 1998 are now married, but that many got married during their fourth year after graduation. By the way, thus far there are no divorces reported for homeschool graduates, though one of our graduates has separated from his wife.



### Practical Advice from Parents

The most interesting part of our survey was the advice that parents gave in response to our question, "Do you have any advice for current homeschooling parents in light of your graduate's experience since graduation?" Here are some of the nuggets of practical advice:

- "Put main emphasis on reading, writing papers, and math so that [your student] has the skills which are needed for college."
- "It is a big plus to have high school homeschoolers take a few courses at a community college for at least 3 reasons: (1) a big confidence booster -- homeschoolers often excel at cc course, (2) cheap college credits while still in high school! (3) looks good on college applications!"
- "If child will attend a secular college please prepare them for the assault on their Christian faith by professors. They should not be afraid to express their "contradictory" opinions or ideas. If they are versed in Bible scriptures and are able to articulate they will plant many seeds. (Grades were not affected by her discussions with professors.)"
- "N. loved mechanics and thought he would do this as a career but after 2 years decided to pursue his second love, music. However his mechanic skills have provided almost full time work while attending college. Encourage your children in their area of talent & interest, but ... stretch them in areas where they have other interests."
- "Have high school students interview people in different areas of business, in order to help them gain understanding for what they might want to study in college."
- "Use the last 2 years of high school to search out careers. Use Career Pathways (Larry Burkett) aptitude tests. Work in some field of interest and/or do an apprenticeship. Our daughter ... was able to ride along with Emergency Medical Technicians in an

ambulance. She then became interested in this field & is now attending training classes."

- "Have your homeschoolers take SAT's and ACT's (and take them seriously!) even if they have no intention of going on to college. It's much easier to take them while still doing course work than it is to go back two years after their last math class."
- "Carefully research all college, federal, and state financial aid forms years before you need them. Do not assume that you will not qualify for grants or scholarships."
- "If [PHAA] is a diploma program you may be interested in, start planning early. I would suggest no later than your student's 6th grade year. By starting early you can get the lesser subjects completed before the more involved subjects begin. In this way you can focus full attention on the more complicated subjects in high school. All in all the PHAA graduation process was very worthwhile."
- "Don't be tempted to let your senior student work too much. It makes the school work take 2nd priority and it's difficult to stay on task. Absolutely make graduation a big deal! A homeschooler needs to see his accomplishments recognized. I definitely recommend participation in a ceremony or at least having a party to celebrate."

### **Find Apprenticeships for Your Student**

Several parents suggested apprenticeships for students, especially for the student who is not bound for college. Here is what various parents wrote:

- "Because B. was homeschooled, he was able to work at G. Heating Air Conditioning and Plumbing during the day at the end of his sophomore year. He worked full time for them each summer and learned the heating trade during school hours. He was able to accomplish his academics that he needed and learn a trade by the time he graduated. He was hired full time out of high school and also has full time employment (at the same company) when he graduates from Bible School."
- "Don't be afraid to have children volunteer or work for free. Many valuable life skills can be learned this way. This graduate started working on a produce farm at age 13 -- he worked basically for free for 2 summers. His daddy got up early with him so he could pick beans with his son. [Their son is currently managing a small produce farm operation on his Grandfather's farm.]"
- "Home-school was right for D. -- he was & is an antsy kid. He needed to get his hands into real work -- his building projects just continued to grow. His last 2-3 years we allowed him to find neighbors who were remodeling and building and they told their friends."
- "D. has learning disabilities. The great advantage of homeschooling was D.'s afternoons out of school to work in small motors and selling many items at home. D. would go and help out at a small motors garage for free for the knowledge in the afternoons. This in turn helped him get the job he presently has [mechanics helper at a Sunoco Station]. D. loves his job. I have never regretted homeschooling D. with his learning disabilities. He was so bored while attending public schools."
- "We would encourage all homeschooling parents to pursue apprenticeship as an alternative to college. It's a lot of work, but so is homeschooling!! It is a much better way of learning. You might be amazed to find out professionals are willing to work with you on developing a program." [Since graduation, this student apprenticed as a midwife for three years and now is a self-employed midwife with registration and certification.]

## Don't Push Child Into College Before They are Ready

Several parents wrote about mistakes they had made pushing kids before they were ready:

- “My daughter is bright and in 5th grade became bored with her school work. I began using harder texts and over a 2 year period she had progressed to using 8th grade materials. Some courses were skipped (English), one science course was done over the summer, and her 7th grade math book was completed in 6 weeks (she simply took the test at the end of each chapter). It was necessary to move her up to higher texts to keep her interest. She then graduated early, at age 16. This is where I would strongly caution parents, early graduation has not proven beneficial, but instead forced a young teen into an adult world. If I could do it over, I would still have moved her into harder texts, but not tell her she had “skipped” a grade, but rather have kept her in her age appropriate grade.”
- “I encourage parents not to push students to apply to college immediately after graduating if they are unsure or have no clear reason for going. J.'s “year off” was an incredible time of growth and maturation, and gave him the time and space to clarify for himself his goals for the future.”
- “Make sure the son/daughter is ready for the college experience. Maturity is a must to withstand the moral pressures in order to succeed academically. In our case 2 years of work experience, maybe learning a trade would have been the preparation needed for college. J. needed at least 2 more years of “growing up” before leaving home. All are not ready for college life at 17 or 18 years of age.” [J. went to a community college right after graduation but then dropped out after 2 years.]

## Why Homeschoolers Do Well

Parents also shared some of the homeschooling advantages that have become evident since their student graduated. Many parents commented (and our 1996 survey found) that homeschooled students do very well in college, usually attaining a very high Grade Point Average. Here are comments from parents about why homeschoolers do so well:

- “A. is currently studying at Kutztown University as a Fine Arts Major. One afternoon she came home and enthusiastically thanked me for homeschooling her and sticking with my convictions regarding homeschooling. She observed the other students at the University that came from public school and noticed their helplessness concerning their desire to learn and how to study. That one strong hug and kiss on the cheek erased all hard work the last 5 years.”
- “Homeschooling has given M. a good work ethic. As a result of taking AP courses in high school he has had to work very hard. This diligence has transferred into the working field. Both of his summer employers have commented on the good job he does.”
- “Both N. and J. have commented about the lack of direction in many of their fellow classmates.... Both were appalled at the lack of money management where the parents paid for everything & the students had no idea what it was like to have a job and manage your own money.”
- “M. is doing very well in college. Homeschool taught her to work efficiently. (Very few homeschoolers are lax and waste time. They want to get done for the day.) She also

learned to work on her own self-motivation. Both the efficiency and self-motivation have helped M. do well in college. The morals she was taught also paid off. She is very responsible and it shows in her work, her study habits, and class attendance. M. wants to learn. Homeschooling is definitely a plus."

- "We are really seeing the benefits of time management as L. finished her first semester of college. She knows how to budget her time for studies and how to keep other areas of her life in balance, such as social activities, church, and exercise. L. recommends lots and lots of writing in the homeschool curriculum and reading as well."
- "I feel the self-discipline, research, and writing skills homeschoolers develop prepares them well for college. J.'s English teacher told her that she has two students who excel in writing in her classes. She said one is still in high school and J. is the other. J. asked if the other student is homeschooled and the teacher told her, "yes." J. then shared that she had been homeschooled as well."

### **Advice for Parents**

And last of all, some words for parents from ones who have been there:

- "This advice is more for homeschooling parents experiencing the empty-nest syndrome than about the graduate. They adapted beautifully. I had the difficulty adjusting."
- "Many times I feel inadequate with some of the courses. I'm still homeschooling one child. During the "bouts" of feelings, I stand on Phil 4:13 and Phil 4:6-7. Praise God for His lighted path!"
- [And last from a mother whose son got married in 1998.] "Enjoy your children while with you. All too soon they begin another home and you will miss their presence in your home."