

Title: Are All Homeschooling Methods Created Equal?

Author: Deborah Taylor-Hough

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### **Are All Homeschooling Methods Created Equal?**

In his provocative essay, “Against School,” John Taylor Gatto (2003) details many of the problems he sees with America’s public schools and methods of education. Gatto (2003) quotes H. L. Mencken in *The American Mercury* that “The aim of public education is not to spread enlightenment at all; it is simply to reduce as many individuals as possible to the same safe level, to breed and train a standardized citizenry, to down dissent and originality.” As a former New York State Teacher of the Year, Gatto’s views of public education were developed after years of firsthand experience within the very system he critiques. When receiving his Teacher of the Year award, Gatto said, “We live in a time of great school crisis. We rank at the bottom of 19 industrialized nations in reading, writing, and arithmetic. At the very bottom” (Taylor, 2009). In “Against School,” Gatto tells his readers what he sees as the cure for the situation of today’s schools. He would like to see parents counteract the effect of the schools by teaching their children 1) to be leaders and adventurers, 2) to think critically and independently, 3) to have a well-developed inner thought life, 4) to spend time alone learning to enjoy their own company, and 5) to interact with adult-level books and materials in a wide range of subjects covering the Liberal Arts and Sciences (Gatto, 2003).

After reading Gatto’s bold statements in “Against School,” concerned parents could quickly make the assumption that home educating their children is the best solution; dashing out to their local teachers’ supply store to stock up on workbooks, textbooks, and flashcards. Homeschooling may not be the right choice for many families, but what about those parents who feel that—for their family and their situation—home education is the best option? They need to ask themselves before venturing into this new lifestyle: Are all homeschooling methods and materials created equal? If the parents’ goal is to educate their children in a manner that will bring about Gatto’s goals for parents as outlined in “Against School,” will the fact that children are now sitting around their kitchen table with their siblings rather than sitting at a school desk surrounded by their peers ultimately make that much of a difference in the more subjective educational outcomes of these children, as outlined by Gatto, if the educational methods chosen are the same as those employed in the schools? If parents decide that it is not just the location of their children’s schooling that matters, but also the method(s) used, then it becomes necessary to identify which of the home education methods commonly employed by homeschooling families would most likely produce the results Gatto desires, such as maturity, independence, and creative critical thinking. Based on Gatto’s description of a well-educated person, a combination of two commonly used homeschooling methods—the Charlotte Mason method and unschooling—would most likely produce the results Gatto would like to see in students.

### **Brief Homeschooling Overview**

The history of home education is long and varied. In her book, *Homeschoolers' Success Stories*, Linda Dobson (2000) states, "The current homeschooling movement is only new in that it has occurred following compulsory attendance laws and has grown sizeable enough to be noticed." Prior to those compulsory attendance laws enacted throughout the United States—starting with Massachusetts in 1852 until the 48th state, Mississippi, joined the rest of the country's compulsory attendance legislation in 1918 (Gatto, 2000)—most children were either educated at home, learned a trade through apprenticeships or personal mentoring, or were sent to private schools if their parents had the financial means to do so. In 2007, an estimated 1.5 million children in the United States were being homeschooled and research found that "parents homeschooled their children for a variety of reasons, but three reasons—to provide religious or moral instruction, concern about the school environment, and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools—were noted as most important" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). While homeschooling represents an increasingly broad cross-section of American families, there is still on-going conflict and disagreement existing between the secular and the religious-motivated homeschoolers, and also between the adherents of various educational methods and philosophies (Dobson, 2000).

Catherine Levison—author of *A Charlotte Mason Education: A Homeschooling How-to Manual* and frequent keynote speaker to homeschooling conventions throughout the United States—listed the main forms of home education she sees in home schools across America today: Unschooling, Classical education, unit studies, the Charlotte Mason method, traditional school-at-home, correspondence schools and school-related umbrella organizations, cooperatives, and computer-based options (Levison, personal communication, 2010). These methods and the expected outcomes of each as they relate to Gatto's article will be explored in more depth later in this paper.

## **Literature Review**

### **Homeschooling's History, Motivations, and Outcomes**

The history of modern homeschooling has its roots in the counterculture Liberal Left, but within twenty years, the movement was fully adopted by the equally counterculture Conservative Right. The ideologies and methodologies surrounding these two diverse and oftentimes polarized groups created an interesting mix of people and cultures within the homeschooling world. Scholarly research and studies on the topic of homeschooling tend to be somewhat limited by the lack of direct availability to homeschooled students. Local school districts receive no funding for homeschoolers in their districts and are not required to keep or report information about homeschoolers to any government agencies, limiting research results to homeschool families self-reporting. The academic achievement levels in outcome-focused studies are based on results from standardized achievement tests, so consequently any home educator who may choose not to participate in these tests for philosophical, ideological, or pedagogical reasons is excluded from these results. Standardized tests also fail to measure more subjective

outcomes such as maturity level, personal autonomy, and creative critical thinking which John Taylor Gatto hoped to see parents instilling in their children (Gatto, 2003).

### **History of Modern Homeschooling**

In the early 1960's, John Holt, a prominent educator, humanist and author, advocated for radical school reform in his popular books, *How Children Fail* and *How Children Learn*. Holt stressed in his writings the need for “educational decentralization and greater parental autonomy” (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009, p. 307). At the same time as Holt's work, many of the 1960's “hippies” were moving into communes, having babies, and hesitating to send their children to the local government-run (“too Conservative”) schools. According to Wilhelm and Firmin (2009), the original modern day homeschoolers were part of the free-love hippy communes of the 1960's (p. 307).

In the 1970's, Holt was contacted by several counterculture Liberal Left homesteaders who were living remotely throughout the countryside, educating their children off the compulsory education grid (Gaither, 2008, p. 125). Holt decided to connect these independent and relatively isolated families with one another, and in 1977, began publishing *Growing Without Schooling (GWS)*, the first newsletter dedicated solely to homeschoolers. *GWS* became a way for these families to share wisdom and knowledge with each other, and to find moral support from others who had also chosen this radical means of schooling (or “unschooling”) their children. Through his tireless activism, Holt—almost by accident—became the de facto leader of the then-underground and mostly illegal homeschooling movement (Gaither, 2008, p. 126). Homeschooling did not become legal in all fifty states until 1993 (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009, p. 309).

Eventually, Holt connected with Raymond and Dorothy Moore, a husband and wife team of educational researchers whose independent research was showing surprising results—that formal instruction in math and reading was best put off until after age eight (Gaither, 2008, p. 130). The Moores began consulting with homeschooling families and they wrote several bestselling books including *Better Late Than Early* and *School Can Wait* (Gaither, 2008, p. 131). Over time, the Moores became regular contributors to Holt's *Growing Without Schooling* newsletter, and after Raymond Moore appeared a number of times in the late 1970's on Dr. James Dobson's national Christian radio program, the concept of homeschooling came out of the homesteads and communes, and found its way into the world of Evangelical Christians and the Conservative Right (Gaither, 2008, p. 132).

In the 1980's, as many private Christian schools had to close their doors due to changes in tax status, a large number of Fundamentalist Christians who had already opted out of the “too Liberal” public schools (Isenberg, 2007, p. 388) found themselves scrambling to find an acceptable educational option for their children that would not involve sending them to the local secular public schools (Gaither, 2008, p. 111). Many Christian textbook publishers began marketing their educational products to this growing group of disenfranchised parents, and the “school-at-home” form of homeschooling was born. These parents attempted to reproduce in their homes the classroom settings of their children's former private schools.

As the academic success of homeschooling became apparent to the general public, the homeschooling movement shifted from being strictly the realm of two extremes—the

Liberal Left and the Conservative Right—and into the mainstream (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009, p. 310). Many public school districts around the country began to offer home-based, teacher-supervised learning options through both in-person and online venues as well as satellite, umbrella, charter, and correspondence programs through both public and private schools (Isenberg, 2007, p. 392). Most of the recent homeschoolers joining the ranks appear to be motivated primarily by academic reasons. Ideological and religious reasons—although still strong—seem to be a less popular parental motivation for homeschooling than in years past (Collom, 2005, p. 331).

### **Parental Motivations for Homeschooling**

Parents who choose to home educate their children are a diverse group and come from a wide range of ideological, academic, and pedagogical views (Collom, 2005, p. 331). To simplify things, Jane Van Galen looked at the most common reasons parents she interviewed chose to homeschool their children, and then categorized those reasons into two main categories she labeled *ideology* and *pedagogy* (1991, p. 66). The idea of two distinctly motivated types of homeschoolers—the Ideologues (religiously motivated) and the Pedagogues (academic and methodology motivated)—is a recurring theme throughout the available literature.

The Pedagogues are the philosophical offspring of John Holt and the early Liberal Left pioneers of the modern homeschooling movement. Pedagogues are concerned mainly with educational methods, improved learning environments for their children, and greater parental autonomy (Collom, 2005, p. 309-310). Many Pedagogues are either professional educators, themselves, or have done research and reading on their own about child development and educational methods (Van Galen, 1991, p. 71). Luke (2003) states, “these parents have deeply-held beliefs about learning, beliefs about which they feel strongly enough to practice at home with their children” (para. 9). The Pedagogues’ “curriculum” usually consists of capitalizing on their children’s natural curiosity and creativity, pursuing child-led interests, and making use of resources within the community (Van Galen, 1991, p. 73). Pedagogues are also more likely to be politically liberal and to practice more experimental styles of learning (Collom, 2005, p. 330).

The Ideologues are largely—but not exclusively—politically conservative Christian families who, as Raymond and Dorothy Moore observed, are “seeking to impart religious values to their children” (as cited in Collom, 2005, p. 309). Cai, Reeves and Robinson (2002) explain that these ideologically motivated parents desire to pass onto their children a set of beliefs, values, morals, and worldview which they believe to be absent in the secular public school system (p. 378). According to Van Galen (1991), the Ideologues tend to structure their homeschooling around a standard curriculum of textbooks and workbooks (p. 73), essentially recreating the traditional classroom setting in their homes. The Ideologues are also more likely to take standardized testing and the ensuing results more seriously than the Pedagogues (Collom, 2005, p. 330).

Collom (2005) suggests that as homeschooling has become more mainstream and less polarized between the two extremes, there are now actually four identifiable divisions in the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children: (1) Ideological, (2)

pedagogical, (3) general dissatisfaction with the public schools, and (4) family-related reasons such as health concerns or special needs of their children (p. 311).

The ideological divide between the Liberal Left and the Conservative Right—between the secularly motivated and the religiously motivated—remains an on-going source of contention within the homeschooling community, itself (Isenberg, 2007, p. 388). Interestingly, Gaither (2008) observed that “to this day, many accounts of homeschooling written by [conservative Christian homeschoolers] do not even mention Holt or the entire left wing of the movement” (p. 144).

### **Discussion and Evaluation of Motivations**

Van Galen (1991) did a service to future researchers when she simplified the reasons parents chose to homeschool into two categories: Ideologues and Pedagogues (p. 66). A previously difficult topic to fully understand became easier to describe and quantify. Although Van Galen’s two categories are still in existence today, it would be naïve for a researcher to assume that all homeschoolers can easily be labeled as one or the other of these two groups now. Not only are some Christian parents homeschooling for pedagogical reasons—and “unschooling” parents homeschooling for religious reasons—but with the entry of the homeschooling movement into the mainstream of society, there are now more reasons than ever why parents choose this path for their families. As Collom (2005) observed, most of homeschooling’s recent converts are choosing to homeschool mainly for academic and family reasons with much less emphasis on the ideological and religious motivations (p. 331). The future of homeschooling will likely become less polarized as new people join the ranks, and perhaps may even swing back toward its more pedagogical roots.

### **Outcomes of Homeschooling**

Homeschooling has consistently proven to be an academically valid educational option. In 1990, Dr. Brian Ray (2000) conducted a survey of 1,500 homeschooling families representing 4,600 homeschooled children, the largest study of its kind at the time. Ray observed that “the home-educated students averaged at or above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized achievement tests in all subject areas,” while the average public school result was the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (p. 74). According to a 1999 research study conducted by L. M. Rudner which measured the academic achievement of 20,000+ homeschooled students, standardized test scores for homeschoolers fell consistently between the 75<sup>th</sup> and 85<sup>th</sup> percentiles (as cited in Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009, p. 310). Other studies have had similar findings (Ray, 2000, p. 74-75).

Ray (2000) stated that some correlations were noted between the parents’ education and income levels, but even with these correlations, homeschooled students with parents of lower education and income levels still scored higher on standardized tests than their public schooled counterparts with the same parental variables (p. 76). The most significant variables in Ray’s (2000) study were the parents’ educational level (which affected the student’s total language scores), the number of years the student was

taught at home (also affected total language scores), the gender of the student (girls generally outperformed boys on the standardized tests), and the frequency of visits to the public library (affected reading scores) (p. 88).

Collom (2005) found several factors that were statistically significant in the outcome of homeschooling: 1) The parents' political views, 2) the parents' level of education, and 3) the parents' dissatisfaction with the public school system (p. 331). Surprisingly, the children of politically conservative parents did better in math, while the children of liberal parents had stronger language skills (Collom, 2005, p. 326). Collom (2005) theorizes that this is probably related more to other variables such as teaching-style and attitudes toward standardized testing than being directly related to political ideology (p. 330). Parents who are homeschooling because of their dissatisfaction with the public schools tend to have students with some of the highest reading and language scores (Collom, 2005, p. 330).

According to Ray (2000), in conventional school classrooms a number of variables have consistently proven to increase academic achievement in the students. Many of these factors are naturally part of the homeschooling life: One-on-one tutoring, increased teacher feedback to the student, direct instruction by the teacher, increased academic engaged time, mastery learning, cooperative learning, increased contextualization of teaching in experiences in the home and community, and increased involvement of parents (p. 91-92). Ray theorizes that if these factors are inherently a part of the homeschooling environment, and it appears that they are, "then it may be likely they would work to the advantage of home school students" (Ray, 2000, p. 92). Cai et al. (2002) observed that because of the close relationship between the teacher/parent and the student/child, the homeschooling teacher can easily individualize daily instruction to the specific needs of each child (p. 373), essentially creating in their homes the most ideal learning environment available, one-on-one tutoring (Ray, 2000, p. 91).

### **Discussion and Evaluation of Outcomes**

If parents choose to homeschool because they are looking for increased academic achievement as measured by standardized achievement tests, the research shows that any method of homeschooling will most likely raise their child's test scores above those of their traditionally schooled counterparts (Ray, 2000, p. 74-75). But if parents are choosing to homeschool because they are looking beyond a simple test score and perhaps looking for outcomes in more subjective areas such as character and critical thinking, the question needs to be asked once again, are all homeschooling methods created equal?

### **Conclusion of Literature Review**

The currently available scholarly research on homeschooling methods and outcomes is still somewhat limited at this point. It mainly focuses on the history of homeschooling, the motivations of homeschooling parents, and the standardized testing outcomes of the students. Questions still remain that will need to be answered directly from homeschoolers, themselves, and from homeschooling families' and experts' own

literature, such as what methods are being used in actual homeschooling families, and what sort of results are these parents seeing in their children? The main focus of the remainder of this paper will be on which method—or methods—would most likely produce Gatto’s desired educational outcomes, or is there perhaps a combination of methods that may work better than any single method? Further research into the main homeschooling methods used today, and how each fits with Gatto’s thoughts in his essay, “Against School” will be explored in the next section.

### **Brief Descriptions of Popular Homeschooling Methods**

Unschooling is based on many of the early teachings of John Holt. It is essentially student-directed learning without a scope-and-sequence plan, focusing on the interests of the child, and allowing the student to pursue their varied interests as far and wide as they personally choose. Classical education has a heavy focus on rote learning and basic facts in the early grades, with an increasing emphasis on critical thinking and oratory in the later years. The Charlotte Mason method is based on the teachings of a British educator from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries who focused on children developing a lifetime love of learning. Correspondence and umbrella schools vary greatly depending upon the school they are affiliated with, but usually tend to rely heavily on workbooks, textbooks, and fill-in-the-blank quizzes and tests. Traditional “school-at-home” education attempts to re-create the schoolroom at home, sometimes to the point of school desks lined up in a row, morning flag salutes, and chalkboards, as well as relying on textbooks, workbooks, teacher-focused lectures, and traditional testing methods. Cooperative schooling is usually done by a group of like-minded homeschooling families with each parent in the group taking on a teaching role in one or more subjects of particular interest or expertise. Computer-based home education can be purchased as a stand-alone curriculum, or as part of a correspondence program with a wide range of methodologies available (Levison, personal communication, April 2010; Ray, 2000, December).

### **Gatto’s Description of the Educated State**

Rather than children simply passing—or even excelling at—standardized tests, or just meeting compulsory attendance criteria, Gatto would prefer the outcome of education to be along the lines of personal maturity, independence, creativity, and critical thinking. While these subjective goals are more difficult to measure than straight-forward test results in Math or Reading, Gatto’s thirty years of working professionally in the trenches of New York’s public schools have made him a well-respected and acknowledged expert in both scholarly and homeschooling circles on the methods necessary to reach the outcomes he is looking to see in successfully educated students. Using Gatto’s suggestions from his article, “Against School,” and his book, *A Different Kind of Teacher*, as an outline for achieving Gatto’s definition of educational success, several common homeschooling methods will be examined and critiqued with the result showing that a combination of Charlotte Mason’s methods and unschooling would most likely best

represent the means to achieve Gatto's goals for parent teachers with their homeschooled students.

According to Gatto (2001), the process of "education describes efforts largely self-initiated for the purpose of taking charge of your life wisely and living in a world you understand. The educated state is a complex tapestry woven out of broad experience, grueling commitments, and substantial risk" (p. 49). This highly subjective description of what it means to be an educated person is explained in further detail throughout Gatto's writings, especially as outlined in the pages of his book, *A Different Kind of Teacher: Solving the Crisis of American Schooling*, and his Harper's essay, "Against School" (Gatto, 2003). His combined "curriculum" as stated in the preceding sources, can be condensed into the following general description of methods Gatto recommends to achieve a well-rounded education:

- Teach serious material
  - History
  - Literature (real books)
  - Philosophy
  - Music
  - Art
  - Economics
  - Theology
  - Be flexible about time, textbooks, materials, and tests
- Encourage maturity
  - Think critically and independently
  - Self-control
  - Financial responsibility
  - Self-entertainment
  - Capacity for insight
  - Examine political and commercial statements
  - Develop deep friendships/relationships
- Train to be leaders and adventurers
  - Encourage curiosity and questions
  - Give autonomy to take risks now and then
  - Adventure
  - Resilience
  - Introduce kids to competent adults

### **The Charlotte Mason Method and Unschooling**

When researching the various homeschooling methods most frequently used today, the one that stood out as being the most academically similar to what Gatto describes (the teaching of serious material) was the Charlotte Mason method. According to Levison (2000), Mason developed a lifetime love of learning in her students by

engaging the children firsthand with nature, literature, science, history, art, music, and avoiding dumbed-down materials as much as possible. The main focus of Mason's educational ideas and philosophy was having the students read top quality literature—real books rather than textbooks—and delving into a wide variety of serious topics throughout childhood (p. 7-9). Mason described most literature written to children as “twaddle” and felt that childish materials should be avoided at all costs. Gatto stated that “I always knew real books and schoolbooks were different,” and he felt he had found proof of that when reading a school edition of *Moby Dick*—essentially a package of prefabricated, pre-thought questions and ideas, what he considered “a disguised indoctrination” rather than a real book (p. 69). Charlotte Mason would most likely have agreed with Gatto's critique of modern schoolbooks and texts.

Another of Mason's methods that fits with Gatto's desired curriculum is the process of narration. Narration is essentially the “telling back” of material learned. It focuses the child's mind on what they have been reading or studying, and they then need to pick and choose what to narrate and what to leave unsaid. In the book *When Children Love to Learn*, Maryellen St. Cyr states that when “practiced with the right books, narration would provide the food upon which the mind could grow and thrive” (Beckman, J., St. Cyr, M., Scott, B., and Macaulay, S. S., 2004, p. 128). Levison (2000) describes this process as oral essay writing and according to Levison, Mason says that narration “is not a mere act of memory because we let their minds act on the material in their own original way. They will classify and connect information” as they see fit (p. 11-14). This sounds like an introduction to Gatto's desired critical thinking because it definitely is not just a parroting back of rote facts and memorized information, but requires the children to make connections within themselves.

Charlotte Mason recommended that parents involved with her P.N.E.U. (Parents National Education Union) correspondence schools should finish teaching all academic subjects in the morning hours before noon, leaving the afternoons and evenings free each day for the children to pursue handiwork, crafts, outdoor play, and self-entertainment (Levison, 2000, p. 53). This idea is definitely in keeping with Gatto's description of encouraging maturity, leadership, and adventure.

Because of the strong emphasis in the Charlotte Mason method on serious adult-level material—avoiding twaddle—this method would ensure the academic and educational goals Gatto outlines, while also providing time in the afternoons for self-regulated blocks of time each day for the students to develop their own interests and adventures. By adding in the following concepts of unschooling during the students free-time, the full Gatto curriculum could be achieved easily in the homeschooling family.

Unschooling is essentially providing an education through the natural connections and activities in the child's world, following their interests and aptitudes, without teaching within the confines of the rigid structures of conventional schooling, but as Gatto stated, “Unschooling, perhaps, but not uneducated” (2003). John Holt, in his bestselling book *How Children Learn*, best describes what unschooling looks like in the life of a child: “What we need to do, and all we need to do, is bring as much of the world as we can into the school and classroom (in our case, into their lives); give children as much help and guidance as they ask for; listen respectfully when they feel like talking; and then get out of the way. We can trust them to do the rest” (Holt, 1995). Unschooling provides the student with nearly unlimited opportunities for adventure, self-

entertainment, and autonomy, and by engaging children actively in the world around them, they have the chance to learn directly from competent adults in the community and to engage with adult-level topics of all sorts.

An interesting side note is that the Charlotte Mason method found its way into modern homeschooling through the Conservative Christian wing of homeschooling (the Idealogues), while unschooling developed in the Liberal Left (the Pedagogues). By combining both of these popular homeschooling methods in their educational efforts, parents today can benefit from homeschooling pioneers in both realms of today's home education movement.

### **Other Homeschooling Methods**

In "Against School", Gatto had a number of strong complaints against the public schools and the regular forms of compulsory education. His main concerns were the high level of boredom in schools—of both the students and the teachers—and also the childishness that was encouraged by not allowing the students to develop their full leadership skills, intellectual capabilities, and inner thought life. Simply recreating the standard classroom setting in the home would not necessarily produce the results Gatto would like to see in children. As stated earlier, research shows that any method of homeschooling will raise children's test scores above those of their traditionally schooled counterparts (Ray, 2000, p. 74-75), but if the parents' goal is more subjective in nature, their choice of homeschooling methods needs to be carefully thought out. If a parent chose another popular form of home education—Classical education, unit studies, traditional school-at-home, correspondence schools and school-related umbrella organizations, cooperatives, and computer-based options—they would still most likely see positive results academically in their homeschooled students but not necessarily the subjective results or processes Gatto recommends. For example, Classical education, with its heavy emphasis on rote learning in the early grades, would have the possibility of developing into boredom for both the student and teacher; something Gatto wants parents and teachers to avoid in the educational process. Unit studies have the potential to be anything the teacher designs, so by keeping in mind Gatto's educational goals and "curriculum," that method could be easily adapted with aspects of Charlotte Mason and unschooling added in. Traditional school-at-home education, cooperative classrooms, computer curriculum, and school-related umbrella programs all have the potential to create the very same environment for homeschoolers that Gatto was concerned about in the public schools.

Much of what Gatto describes as being missing from the public schools can be provided easily in the homeschool, no matter which educational method a parent chooses, simply by making a few modifications and using techniques from unschooling and the Charlotte Mason method in combination with whatever curriculum or method they have chosen for their family. For example, by applying Charlotte Mason's ideas about finishing academics in the morning hours and then leaving the afternoon free for exploration and "unschooling," any homeschooling method could produce more of Gatto's results of building maturity, leadership, and adventure into children's lives. If a parent were using a more traditional textbook approach to home education, they could

supplement textbook reading with real books on the same topics. For example, if a textbook or a literature anthology included a snippet from Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, the parent could assign the entire book as required reading so the child would benefit from and interact with the full message the author originally intended rather than just a small segment of the book presented out-of-context and with discussion questions already provided by the textbook editor.

### **Conclusion**

To answer the question initially raised in this article—are all homeschooling methods created equal—the answer is no. Although all methods of homeschooling can produce standardized test results that put the public schools to shame, not all methods will produce the same level of personal maturity, leadership, and intellectual capabilities in the students. For the conscientious parent looking to see their children develop into the self-reliant, critical thinkers Gatto described in the “Against School” essay and his other works, a combination of Charlotte Mason’s methods and unschooling would have the best chance of success. For the interested parent looking to homeschool their children with these methods, or even to supplement their child’s public school experience with some of these proven homeschooling techniques, numerous books, articles, and websites are available that detail the practical how-to’s of both unschooling and the Charlotte Mason method.

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