

# Structured homeschooling gets an A+

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"There's no place like home," an iconic line uttered by Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, might apply to learning the ABC's, math and other core subjects. A new study from Concordia University and Mount Allison University has found that homeschooling — as long as it's structured or follows a [curriculum](#) — can provide kids with an academic edge.

"Structured homeschooling may offer opportunities for academic performance beyond those typically experienced in public schools," says first author Sandra Martin-Chang, a professor in the Concordia Department of Education, noting this is among the first nonpartisan studies to investigate home education versus public schooling.

Published in the *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, the investigation compared 74 children living in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick: 37 who were homeschooled versus 37 who attended public schools. Participants were between 5 and 10 years old and each child was asked to complete standardized tests, under supervision of the research team, to assess their reading, writing, arithmetic skills, etc.

"Although public school children we assessed were performing at or above expected levels for their ages, children who received structured homeschooling had superior test results compared to their peers: From a half-grade advantage in [math](#) to 2.2 grade levels in reading," says Martin-

Chang. "This advantage may be explained by several factors including smaller class sizes, more individualized instruction, or more academic time spent on core subjects such as reading and writing."

The research team also questioned mothers in both samples about their marital status, number of children, employment, education and household income. The findings suggest that the benefits associated with structured homeschooling could not be explained by differences in yearly family income or maternal education.

## **Unschooling versus traditional school**

The study included a subgroup of 12 homeschooled children taught in an unstructured manner. Otherwise known as unschooling, such education is free of teachers, textbooks and formal assessment.

"Compared with structured homeschooled group, children in the unstructured group had lower scores on all seven academic measures," says Martin-Chang. "Differences between the two groups were pronounced, ranging from one to four grade levels in certain tests."

Children taught in a structured home environment scored significantly higher than children receiving unstructured homeschooling. "While children in public school also had a higher average grade level in all seven tests compared with unstructured homeschoolers," says Martin-Chang.

Public schools play an important role in the socialization of children, says Martin-Chang, "Yet compared to public education, homeschooling can present advantages such as accelerating a child's learning process."

In Canada, it is estimated that about one per cent of children are homeschooled. According to 2008 estimates from the National Center

for Education Statistics, about 1.5 million [children](#) in the United States are homeschooled.

Provided by Concordia University

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