***Socialisation (‘The Greatest Attribute of Home-education’)***
*by Bruce & Karen McNeice*

Unfortunately, a parent who is new to home-education may receive mixed reactions from other people. You may well find initially, even well-meaning friends and relatives express concerns about your intentions. However, in time, they will see and acknowledge the fruit of your family’s home-based training.

Whenever peopleare discussing 'home-schooling' or 'home-education', the topic of socialisation invariably seems to arise. Parents are often confronted with objections or questions such as these:

*“What about ‘socialisation’? But won't your children suffer socially if they don’t go to school? Surely children need a lot of interaction with other children their age, in order to grow up being well socialised?”*

The quickest answer to this issue is that in recent years, there are now so many support group activities going on in most regions, that there are many more opportunities for socialisation than parents can fit into their schedules. However, let’s also look at the research on ‘socialisation’…

The research of world-renowned educators, psychologists and sociologists (such as Dr. James Dobson, Dr. Raymond & Dorothy Moore; Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner; Susan Schaeffer Macaulay and Ray Ballmann) has shown that this notion about the detrimental effects of homeschoolers not being socialised is a complete fallacy

Many parents actually choose to educate their children at home because of the dangers of negative peer socialisation. Both the Moores and Ballmann explain that it is important to realise that there are two kinds of socialisation: “positive” and “negative”. Positive socialisation helps a child to confidently grow and develop to his/her full potential in life. Ballmann states that when a child's personality develops *"in a warm atmosphere of love and acceptance, that child will usually socialise well with all age groups, including his/her own age group"* (Ballmann, 1991, p.71).

It is interesting that Professor Harold McCurdy’s study of the family backgrounds of great geniuses and leaders throughout history reveals three surprisingly common factors contributing to their success.

i) a high degree of attention focused upon the child by parents and other adults, expressed in the intensive educational measures and, usually, abundant love;

ii) minimal time spent with other children, especially outside the family; and

iii) lots of free time [under parental supervision] for creative play, fantasy, exploration and thinking.

*" It might be remarked that the mass education of our public-school system is, in its way, a vast experiment on the effect of reducing all three factors to a minimum: accordingly, it should tend to suppress the occurrence of genius."* (McCurdy, "The Childhood Pattern of Genius," Horizon Magazine, May 1960. p. 38.)

Research conducted by Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner and his team at Cornell University, also showed up quite conclusively that children who spend more elective time with their peers than with their parents, especially in the early years, are much more likely to become peer-dependentfor their attitudes, thoughts and beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, 1970).

Dr Moore claims that the cornerstone of positive socialisation is the development of self-worth. His research has shown that children who have stayed at home longer (up to age 10 or 12) before entering school, often become social leaders because they are already confident from their years of positive social interactions with trusted family and friends. They also tend to be more independent in their thinking and values, rather than peer dependent for what they believe (Moore, ‘The Successful Home-school Family Handbook’ [‘T.S.H.F.H.’] 1994, chapters 7 & 8).

Ballmann explains further that the child, who is separated from parents for a large period of the day (at school), is restricted to socialising primarily with his/her age mates. The home-educated child, on the other hand will usually have social contacts with people from a broader spectrum of ages and occupations. The flexibility of learning at home allows for more exposure to 'real life' than is possible at a normal school (Ballmann, 1991, p. 71).

Charlotte Mason, believed that one of the reasons that home is superior in educational value, is that it is **not** an artificial environment. The school is really the ‘artificial environment’ (Shaeffer Macaulay, 1991, p.72). School often provides the only place and time in a person's life when they have to relate to thirty other people of the same age (and possibly gender). The mix of people and experiences found in normal home and community-neighbourhood living, provides a far better preparation for the ‘real world’.

Another study conducted by researchers from the University of North Carolina, discovered that day-care children were found to be involved in fifteen times more acts of negative aggression than children cared for in the home. Dr Moore states that: *"This did not represent greater assertiveness or willingness to stand up for their rights, but rather a tendency towards physical and verbal attacks on others"* (Moore, 1994, ‘T.S.H.F.H.’ chap. 7).

Both Dr Moore and Ballmann cite case after case of home-schooled people who have gone on to achieve great success in life, often becoming leaders in their field. Here are just a small sample of this extensive list: General Douglas MacArthur, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, The Wright Brothers, Claude Monet, John Wesley, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Hans Christian Anderson, Agatha Christie, Charles Dickens, C. S. Lewis, George Bernard Shaw (Moore, 1984, p.201; Ballmann, 1991, p.14 & 65).

**Myths Dispelled:**

The Queensland Education Department’s ‘Home-school Review Report’, 2003 showed very clearly that the major concerns of the government about the ability of home-educating parents to carry out their duty of care for children, were totally unfounded and misguided perceptions.

Quoting the Report on three issues:

i) Socialisation:

*“One of the more popular myths about home-schooling is that children who do not attend regular schooling are not socially developed and do not mature into confident well-balanced individuals.”*

*“Tillman (1995) has documented that home-schooled children participated in a wide range of extra-curricular and community activities both with age peers and with those of more than two years age difference outside the immediate family.”*

*“Shyers (1992) study demonstrated significantly higher assertiveness and self-concept ratings with home schooled children than their traditionally schooled peers. He found that these children exhibited significantly lower problem behaviour as a means of resolving conflict and other social issues, than their peers in schools.”*

*“In summary, researchers have found home schooled children are as well socialised as students educated in traditional State and non-State schools.” (Qld Education Department, 2003, p.19)*

ii) Quality of Education:

*“Another myth relates to the quality of the educational achievement of home-schooled children. There is no research evidence to suggest that home schooled children perform in ways that are educationally inferior to their peers enrolled, and in attendance, at schools.”*

*“There has been much research that concludes that children whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to achieve academically (Mayberry and Knowles, 1989; Simmons, 1994; Lines, 1995). This is the basis of much contemporary educational policy and practice. Parental involvement is at a maximum when parents choose to home school their children.” ( p.19)*

*“Parents who educate their children at home for pedagogical or philosophical reasons are unlikely to knowingly do anything that would jeopardise that development.” (Qld Education Department, 2003, p.20)*

iii) Child Protection:

*“A third myth relates to issues of child protection. The argument sometimes put is that home schooled children, by virtue of their perceived ‘social isolation’, are more at risk than their schooled peers to various forms of child abuse. The argument is largely constructed on the absence of a teacher who is now required to report any evidence of apparent child abuse to the Principal of a school. These arguments and their derivatives are spurious. There is no evidence, reputable research or judicial data to support this position.” (Qld Education Department, 2003, p.19)*

Furthermore, it is reasonable that the other Australian States could show a similar trend as Police figures produced in South Australia, which *“… show that the main sex abusers of children are not parents but professionals, such as welfare workers and teachers. The distribution of children by abuser is as follows: welfare workers and teachers account for over 70% of sex abuse cases; mothers and siblings together less than 1%; fathers, stepfathers and family friends each under 2%; other relatives less than 3%; and strangers around 20%. A child is many more times likely to be sexually abused when he steps out of the confines of the family home.”*

 (Robert Osmak, member of the Home-school Review Committee 2003)

Of course, in recent years the mandated child protection policies of schools may have improved some of these issues.

**Research to Legislation, the Missing Link:**

Unfortunately, the findings of the Home-school Review Committee (2003) regarding the debunking of these myths have been largely ignored; and the resulting Education Act/Regulations (2006) seemed to be trying to fix a problem that was shown to be non-existent. The new legislation implemented more reporting than the previous Act, more monitoring regulations, more authority for officials to decide on the suitability (or not) of parents to educate their own children, and higher penalties for non-compliance. Now, nearly two decades later, reports from parents interacting with the Qld Home Education Unit (HEU) tell of stricter monitoring and greater numbers of people having their applications/reports being rejected.

There has been no improvement as this legislation reflects the same mistrust and myths that the Education Department’s Homeschool Review powerfully debunked.

While all the reputable research confirms home-education as a superior educational option, with no need for regulation and monitoring; government education departments invariably tend to ignore these findings (even when they are from their own research), and then proceed to further regulate and penalise non-registered home-educators.

When the 2006 draft Bill was enacted, the result was that (as the Report reviewers originally predicted) *“…the cycle of suspicion and mistrust will continue for another generation.” (Qld Ed. Dept. 2003 p.21)*

Therefore, on a positive note, we would encourage you to be confident and provide opportunities for training your children in the positive socialisation which a home-based Charlotte Mason education affords.

Useful resources for this long-term task include…

* ‘Parents and Children’ by Charlotte Mason
* ‘Formation of Character’ by Charlotte Mason
* ‘Home Built Discipline’ by Dr Raymond Moore
* Parenting books, DVDs, webinars, etc from [www.loveandlogic.com](http://www.loveandlogic.com/)
* ‘Training for Royalty’ by Earl & Diane Rodd