

'Mom, dad better than certified teachers' Report says it's 'myth' that 'qualifications' help

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Not only do a long list of studies show that mom and dad can teach their own children as effectively as any "certified" teacher, there are indications that for some subjects, those "qualified" instructors actually deliver a negative impact to the performance of their students, according to a new assessment assembled by the [Home School Legal Defense Association](#).

The organization periodically assembles information for its constituency, the hundreds of thousands of families across the United States that teach their own children at home.

This [new report by Chris Klicka, senior counsel for the HSLDA](#), is titled, "The Myth of Teacher Qualifications." He reported, "Educational research does not indicate any positive correlation between teacher qualifications and student performance." Many courts have found teacher qualification requirements on homeschoolers to be too excessive or not appropriate. The trend in state legislatures across the country indicates an abandonment of teacher qualification requirements for homeschool teachers. In fact, Americans, in general, are realizing that the necessity of teacher qualifications is a myth. The teachers' unions and other members of the educational establishment make up the small minority still lobbying for teacher certification in order to protect their disintegrating monopoly on education."

He said homeschoolers need such information to deal with issues such as that raised in Kansas a few years ago, when the state school board association tried to obtain a law that would have required homeschool teachers to be subject to state certification and licensing requirements.

The assessment reviewed literally dozens of studies that looked into the issue. For example, a 1999 Thomas Fordham Foundation study called "Better Teachers, Better Schools" looked at data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study survey of 24,000 eight-grade students.

Two key questions were whether teachers with "standard" certification outperform teachers with alternative or probationary credentials in terms of student achievement and are different teacher licensure components related to achievement.

In that study, the authors found, "Although teacher certification is pervasive, there is little rigorous evidence that it is systematically related to student achievement. Contrary to conventional wisdom, mathematics and science students who have teachers with emergency credentials do no worse than students whose teachers have standard teaching credentials, all else being equal. This result should, at the very least, cast doubt on assertions that standard certification should be required of all teachers."

According to the HSLDA report, "The study also found that having a degree in education has no impact on student science test scores and, in mathematics, having a B.A. in education actually has a statistically negative impact on scores in math!"

According to the evaluation of studies, "Most education officials publicly claim that teachers need

special 'qualifications' in order to be effective. As a result, public education organizations often promote legislation or an interpretation of the law which would require home school parents to have one of three qualifications: 1) a teacher certificate, 2) a college degree, or 3) pass a 'teacher's exam.'"

But, the HSLDA report said, "Although this seems reasonable on the surface, such requirements not only violate the right of parents to teach their children as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments, but virtually all academic research documents that there is no positive correlation between teacher qualifications (especially teacher certification requirements) and student performance."

"I have talked," wrote Klicka, "with hundreds of school officials who cannot understand how a 'mere mother' with a high school diploma could possibly teach her own children. These officials literally take offense that parents would try to teach their children and actually think that they will do as well as teachers in the public school who have at least four years and sometimes seven years of higher education.

"Unfortunately, critics in the media have also believed this myth and will question the validity of homeschooling by asking, 'But are the parents qualified?' What is so laughable about this belief in teacher qualifications by public school authorities are the statistics which show the appalling decline in competency among certified public school teachers and the failure of the teacher colleges," he wrote.

The assessment said, "One of the most significant studies in this area was performed by Dr. Eric Hanushek of the University of Rochester, who surveyed the results of 113 *studies* on the impact of teachers' qualifications on their students' academic achievement. Eighty-five percent of the studies found *no positive correlation* between the educational performance of the students and the teacher's educational background.

"Although 7 percent of the studies did find a positive correlation, 5 percent found a *negative impact*," the report said.

Sam Peavey, professor emeritus of the School of Education at the University of Louisville, also concluded: "I wish I could tell you that those thousands of [teacher certification documents] contributed significantly to the quality of children's learning, but I cannot. ... After fifty years of research, we have *found no significant correlation between the requirements for teacher certification and the quality of student achievement*.

He said the one way to identify a good teacher is to look at the performance of the students.

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