

Home schooling continues to evolve

By Linda Perlstein, Newsweek

In the beginning, your kids need you—a lot. They're attached to your hip, all the time. It might be a month. It might be five years. Then suddenly you are expected to send them off to school for seven hours a day, where they'll have to cope with life in ways they never had to before. You no longer control what they learn, or how, or with whom.

Unless you decide, like an emerging population of parents in cities across the country, to forgo that age-old rite of passage entirely.

When Tera and Eric Schreiber's oldest child was about to start kindergarten, the couple toured the high-achieving public elementary school a block away from their home in an affluent Seattle neighborhood near the University of Washington. It was "a great neighborhood school," Tera says. They also applied to a private school, and Daisy was accepted. But in the end they chose a third path: no school at all.

Eric, 38, is a manager at Microsoft. Tera, 39, had already traded a career as a lawyer for one as a nonprofit executive, which allowed her more time with her kids. But "more" turned into "all" when she decided that instead of working, she would homeschool her daughters: Daisy, now 9; Ginger, 7; and Violet, 4.

We think of homeschoolers as evangelicals or off-the-gridders who spend a lot of time at kitchen tables in the countryside. And it's true that most homeschooling parents do so for moral or religious reasons. But education observers believe that is changing. You only have to go to a downtown Starbucks or art museum in the middle of a weekday to see that a once-

unconventional choice “has become newly fashionable,” says Mitchell Stevens, a Stanford professor who wrote *Kingdom of Children*, a history of homeschooling. There are an estimated 300,000 homeschooled children in America’s cities, many of them children of secular, highly educated professionals who always figured they’d send their kids to school—until they came to think, Hey, maybe we could do better.

When Laurie Block Spigel, a homeschooling consultant, pulled her kids out of school in New York in the mid-1990s, “I had some of my closest friends and relatives telling me I was ruining my children’s lives.” Now, she says, “the parents that I meet aren’t afraid to talk about it. They’re doing this proudly.”

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