



MESD Homeschool Survey Report

April 2024

Background

Homeschooling is an educational option in Oregon. Families may choose to homeschool their child at any time during the year and for any duration. Families who choose to homeschool are required to notify their local Education Service Districts (ESD) upon withdrawing from public or private school, in accordance with ORS 339.010 and OAR 581-021-0026(4). Multnomah ESD provides homeschooling registration for students who live in Multnomah County.

As of November 1, 2023, there were approximately 3,117 students registered for homeschooling in Multnomah County.

The number of registered students is based on the total number of registered homeschool students and may not be completely accurate. By Oregon law, families are required to notify MESD when they start homeschooling, but they are not required to notify MESD when they discontinue homeschooling. Not all homeschool families may be aware of the homeschool notification rules, and so there is a potential that the registration numbers are not reflective of all the youth being served by homeschooling. Additionally, while some families update their homeschool registration when their homeschool status changes, some families may not, which may result in an overcount of homeschooling youth in our region.



MESD Homeschool Survey

Purpose of the MESD Homeschool Survey

The purpose of the survey is to better understand who is opting into homeschooling in Multnomah County, why they are doing so, and what resources they find useful. This information is important for schools and districts to know in order to improve existing programs and to develop new options to better support students and families, including families who continue to homeschool.

The results of the survey will be used in the following ways. They will:

- Be shared with Multnomah County districts and schools to inform their practices;
- Be used to improve and/or expand homeschool supports provided by MESD;
- Provide guidance for further inquiry; and
- Offer insights for families and community members interested in localized homeschool data.

Survey Methods

The Homeschool Survey was administered in March 2024. All families who were currently registered for homeschooling through MESD's homeschool notification system were invited to participate in the survey by email and mail, when addresses were available.

A paper survey was mailed to families, along with a self-addressed and stamped envelope. Families who provided email addresses upon notifying MESD of their decision to homeschool were sent an electronic version of the survey. The entire survey instrument can be found in [Appendix A](#).



In total, 1,925 families were invited to participate in the survey. Families homeschooling more than one child received only one invitation to participate. The breakdown by survey type is as follows:

- 1,847 families received both paper and electronic surveys
- 78 families received just paper surveys (no email address was available)

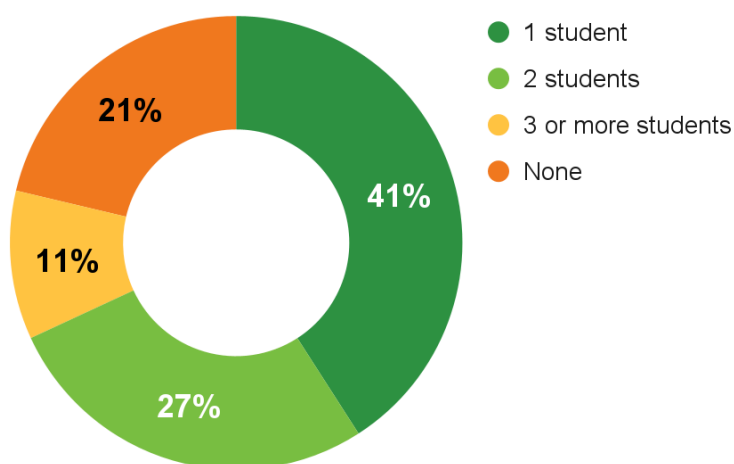
A total of 320 responses were collected (178 electronically and 142 by mail), resulting in a 17% response rate.

Participant Characteristics

Number of Homeschooled Children

About 40% of participants indicated that they currently homeschool one student; just over one-fourth (27%) homeschool two students, and about one in ten (11%) homeschool three or more students. One in five participants (21%) indicated that they do not currently homeschool any children.

Chart 1. Number of Children Homeschooled by Survey Participants (n=320)





Education Within Households

Most participants indicated that all of their children are homeschooled (66%); just over a third of participants (34%) said they also have school-aged children who are not homeschooled.

Chart 2. Survey Participants with School Aged Students Who Are Not Homeschooling (n=320)

■ Yes, I have children who are not homeschooled ■ No, I do not

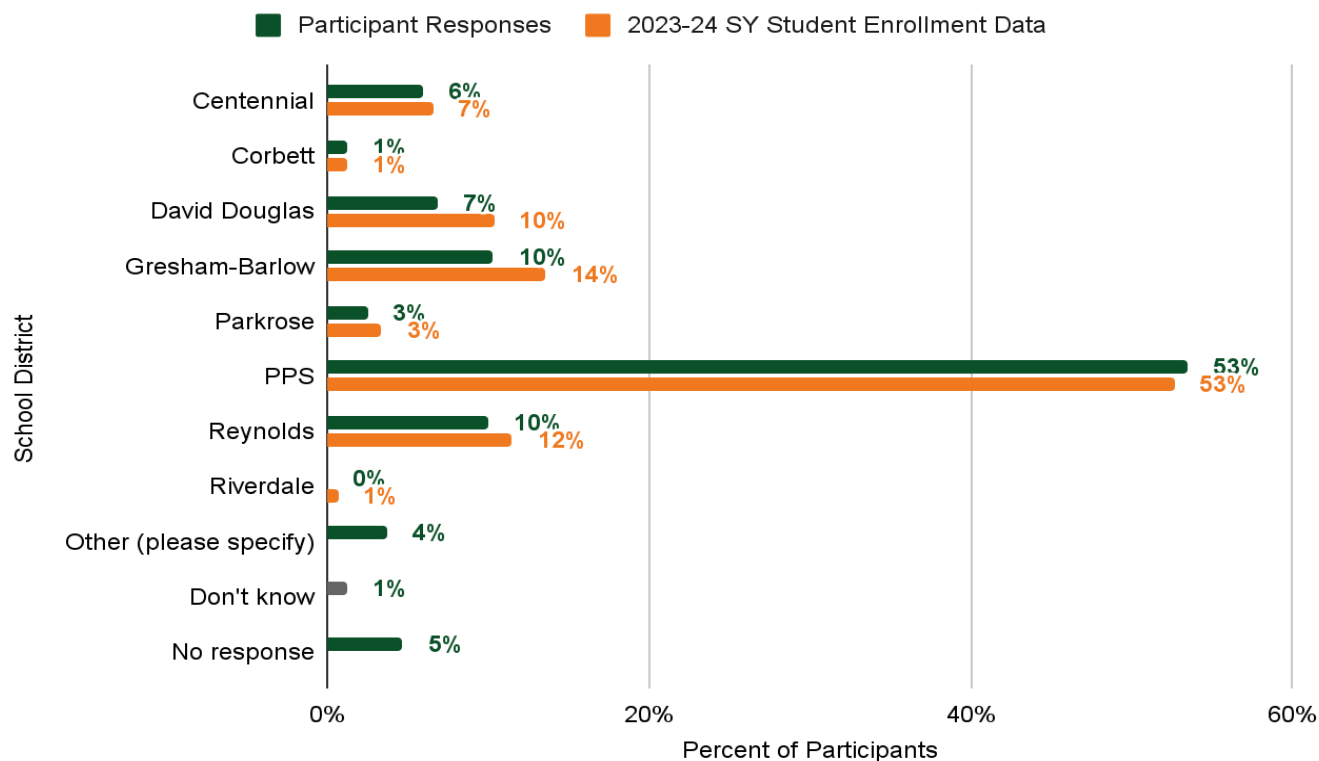


Resident District

The distribution of survey participants by school district is similar to that of the overall enrollment of Multnomah County school districts. Over half of participants indicated that they live within the enrollment boundaries of Portland Public Schools (53%). About one in ten participants live in Reynolds School District, and a similar amount live in Gresham-Barlow School District (10% each). A handful of participants live in David Douglas School District (7%) and Centennial School District (6%). A few participants said that they live in Corbett School District or were unsure of which district they lived in (1% each). Participants who selected 'Other' indicated that they no longer live in Multnomah County or did not specify which district they live in (4%).



Chart 3. Survey Participants by Neighborhood District (n=320)



Source: Oregon Department of Education Fall Membership Reports

Race and Ethnicity

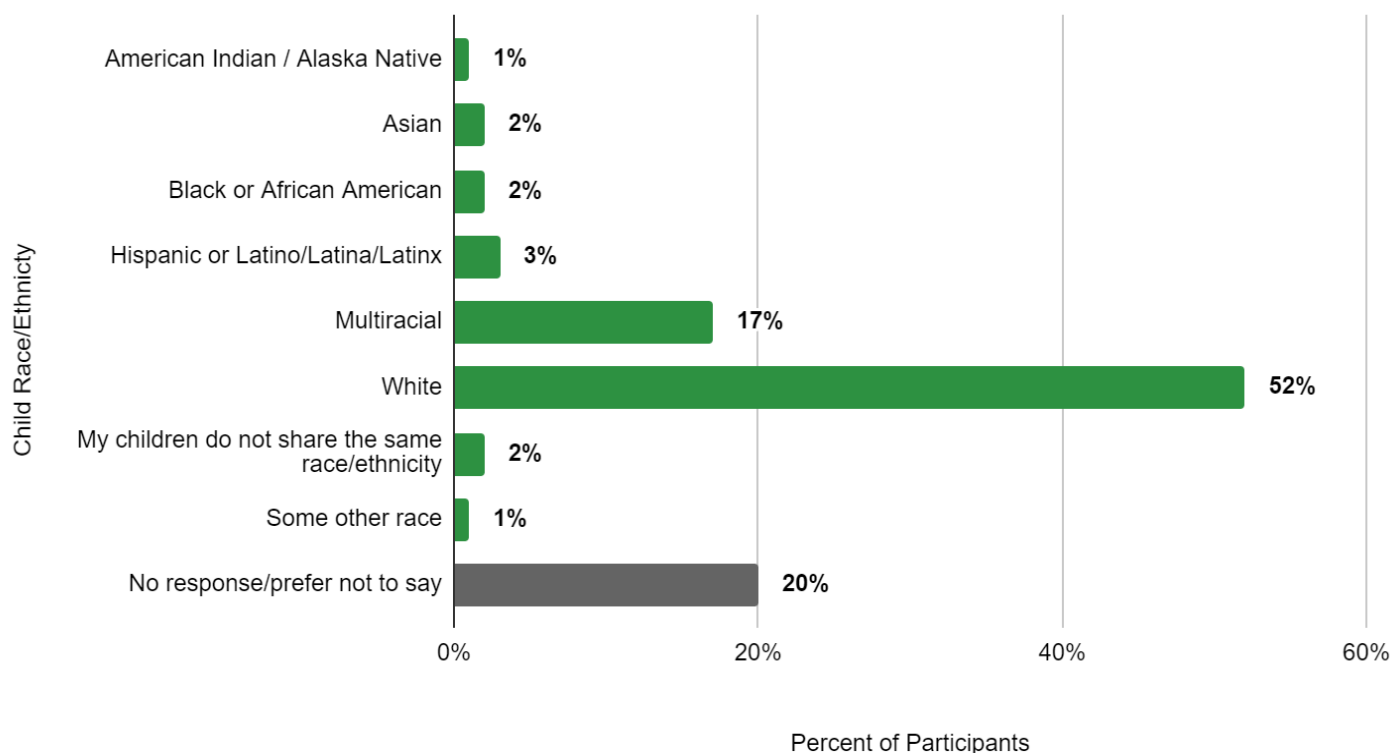
Just over half of participants said their homeschooled child is White (53%). About one in five participants (18%) said that their child is Multiracial. Fewer participants identified their homeschooled child as Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx (3%), Asian (2%), Black or African American (2%), American Indian/Alaska Native (1%), or some other race or ethnicity (1%).

Participants with multiple homeschooled children were also given the option to share the racial and ethnic identity of each child. About 2% of participants responded to this question.



These responses often described families with children with different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Chart 4. Race or Ethnicity of Survey Participants' Children (n=320)

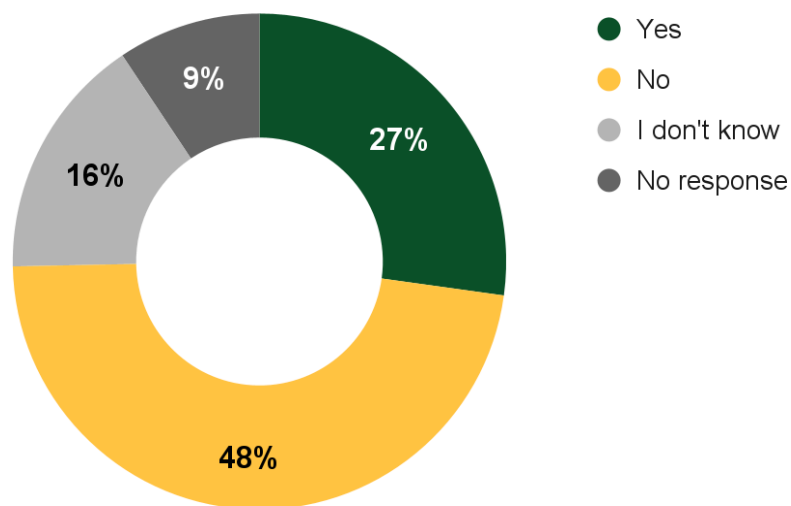


Special Education

About one in three participants (27%) indicated that their homeschooled child is eligible for special education services. Nearly half of participants (48%) said that their child is not eligible for these services. One in four participants said they were unsure (16%) or did not respond to this question (9%).



Chart 5. Homeschooled Children of Survey Participants Eligible for Special Education Services (n=320)





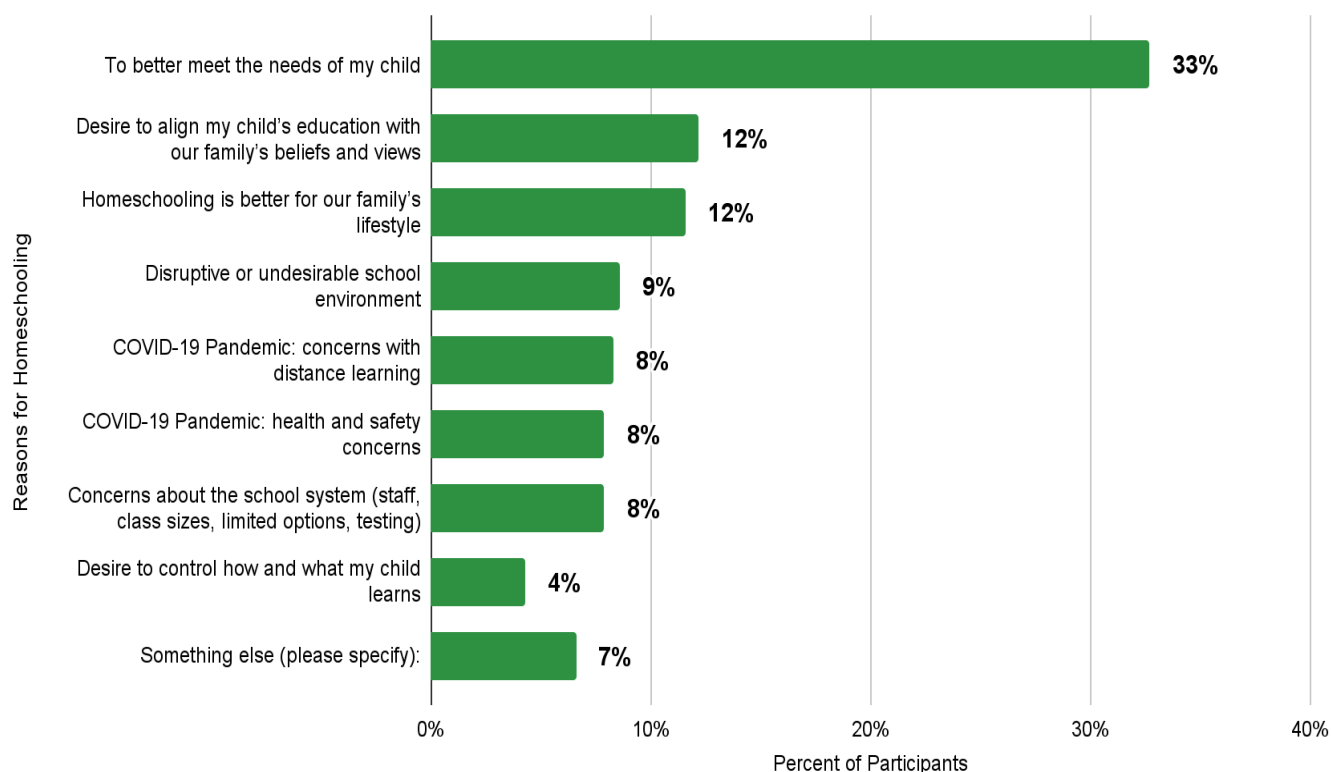
Key Findings

Reasons for Homeschooling

Participants were asked to select the primary reason they decided to start homeschooling. The question provided a list of response options that were created based on open-ended data from the [2022 Homeschool Survey](#). After identifying their primary reason for homeschooling, participants were given the option to share any additional reasons that contributed to their decision.

The most commonly selected reason suggests that a third of participants began homeschooling to better meet the needs of their child (33%).

Chart 6. Survey Participants' Primary Reason for Homeschooling (n=303)





The next tier of reasons indicated that participants had a desire to align their child's education with their family's beliefs and views (12%) or believed that homeschooling was better for their family's lifestyle (12%). The final grouping of responses highlighted participants' concerns about their child's school environment (9%), distance learning (8%), and health or safety concerns (8%) during the COVID-19 pandemic, and issues with the school system (8%). A few participants also indicated that they wanted to have control over how and what their child learns (4%).

About half of participants also provided an open-ended response to share more about their primary reason for homeschooling or to provide additional reasons for doing so. A large portion of responses highlighted parents' concerns with the school system-particularly around safety, approaches to learning and curriculum, and structural issues such as class sizes and insufficient resources.

Sample quotes:

"I didn't want my kids participating in active shooter/lockdown drills. My elementary school was using an outdated Lucy Calkins curriculum. My school had lead pipes and other problems related to age needing to be repaired. The school is right next to the freeway and the outdoor area is largely pavement."

"Too large of classrooms, bullying, not enough food served for hot lunches, disorganization in classrooms, not enough security, covid protocols, homeschooling worked better/scheduling for our family."

"Very disappointed/ unhappy with the quality of our neighborhood schools."

"Lack of communication from teachers/school in regard to students safety & learning. Lack of teacher control over other students. Disagree with topics being covered in school."



Other participants expanded on their experiences with schools that were unable to meet the needs of their child.

Sample quotes:

"I have a child with sensory issues, and the current public school system would not be able to support his needs."

"We have an ASD student that needed more independence and more advanced learning opportunities."

"Severely ADHD and mildly autistic child. Despite IEP, public school was not a good fit."

"The school did not meet the educational needs of my highly gifted child, the "mid-school math" curriculum was not satisfactory, and my child endured harsh bullying."

Several participants emphasized the importance of recognizing that the decision to homeschool is complex and could not isolate their reasoning to one of the provided response options.

Sample quotes:

"Really, a combo of most of the above, both kids had high anxiety and really struggle with executive functioning skills. The school environment was excruciating for them no matter how great some of the adults etc. were. We just had to find a different path for the sake of everyone's health."

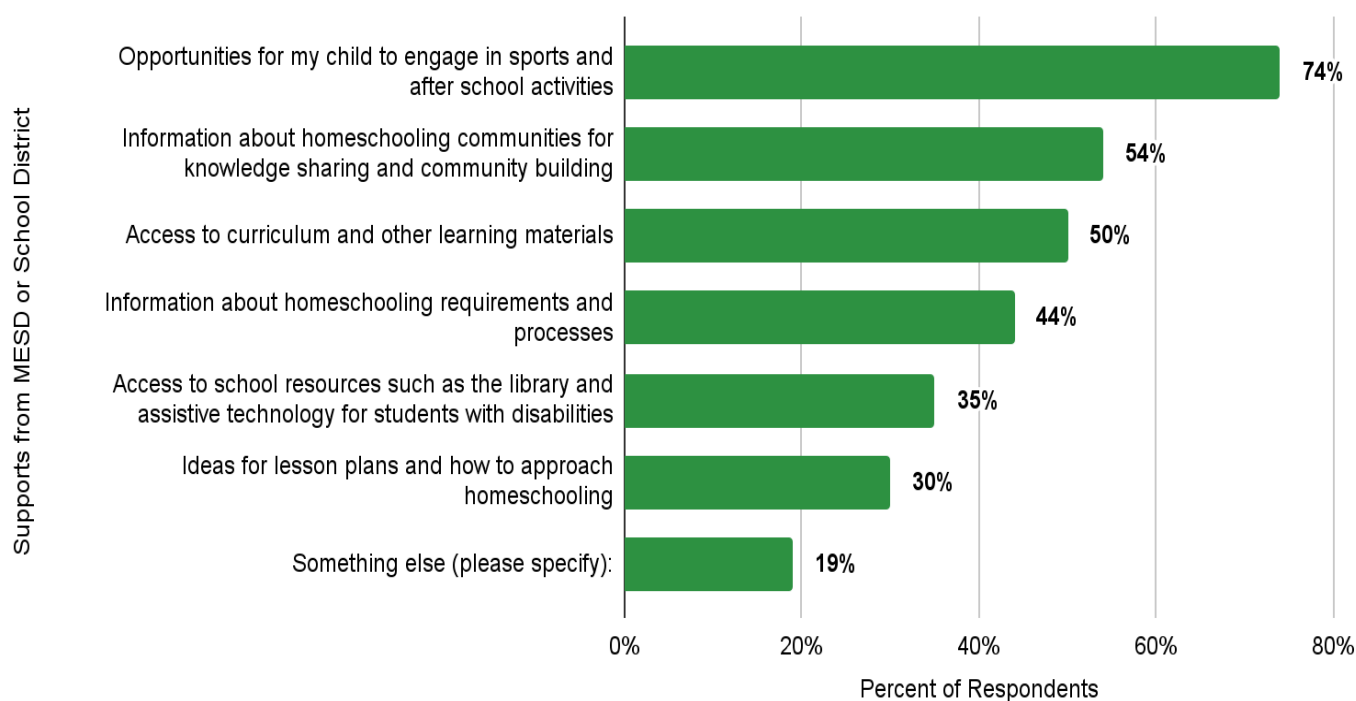


Resources for Homeschooling Families

Participants were given a list of supports that MESD or their school district could offer and were asked to select the resources that would be useful to them.

Engaging homeschooled children with after-school activities and building community with other homeschool families were ranked as the most useful sources of support. A majority of respondents said that it would be useful to have opportunities for their child to engage in sports and other afterschool activities (74%). Just over half of the respondents said that it would be useful to have information about homeschooling communities for knowledge sharing and community building (54%).

Chart 7. Sources of Support That are Useful for Homeschool Families (n=278)



Other useful sources of support include having access to materials and information that will enhance parents' homeschooling efforts. Half of respondents indicated that it would be



useful to have access to curriculum and other learning materials (50%), and four in ten would like to have information about homeschooling curriculum and requirements (44%). About one in three participants (35%) found it useful to have access to school resources such as libraries and assistive technology, or to have support with lesson planning and how to approach homeschooling (30%).

About one in five participants (19%) also provided other unlisted ways that MESD and the school districts can better support their homeschooling needs. Most responses asked for additional support with accessing and using resources such as standardized testing, tutoring services, college courses, college preparatory counseling, financial assistance or allotment, resources for students with special needs, TAG resources, and trauma informed and culturally competent tutors/mentors.

Several participants also indicated that they would like to access specific programs to engage their child with arts and music, extracurricular activities, local library and community center events, or partial enrollment opportunities for hybrid learning. A few participants also wanted information that would help them understand schooling requirements or benchmark indicators of learning for each grade level. Some participants also shared their past experiences of reaching out for support and not receiving any, which might suggest that systems of communication with homeschool-enrolled families can be improved.

Homeschooling Organizations

Participants were asked to share the names of any homeschool organizations they engaged with. Open-ended responses were coded to identify commonalities across participants. Responses below are representative of participants who indicated that they are homeschooling one or more children (n=166).

About one-fourth of respondents said that they were not part of any homeschooling organizations or groups (n=43). Nearly one in four participants mentioned a program or



organization that provides opportunities for their children to take in-person courses and tutoring sessions (n=38). Although these programs also offer online resources, some respondents said that their children attend in-person classes for specific subjects like music, science, etc.

Some participants also shared their involvement with community groups that focus on relationship building, community support, and social activities (n=24). These groups often gather organically and are built on connections made online or within the local community. Several participants mentioned groups and programs that allowed their child to experience immersive science and outdoor learning opportunities (n=22). Participants also cited several online programs and resources (n=20). A handful of participants shared their connection to groups and organizations that aligned with their family's values, particularly their religious beliefs and practices (n=19).

Table 1. Examples of Homeschool Groups and Organizations

Group/Organization	Examples
In-person/hybrid resources and programs	First Class Charter School, Alder Commons, Alliance Charter, Teach NW Charter Schools, Village Home
Community groups	Facebook groups, book clubs, small/informal co-ops, social and sports clubs
Outdoor/science groups	OHSC OMSI, Rewild Homeschool Program, Trackers, informal nature co-op
Online programs/resources	Fossil Distance Learning Program, Oregon Home Education Network, Baker Web Academy, First Class
Values based programs/communities	Church homeschooling support groups and co-ops, OCEANetwork, Abeka, Classical Conversations



Likelihood of Returning to Public School

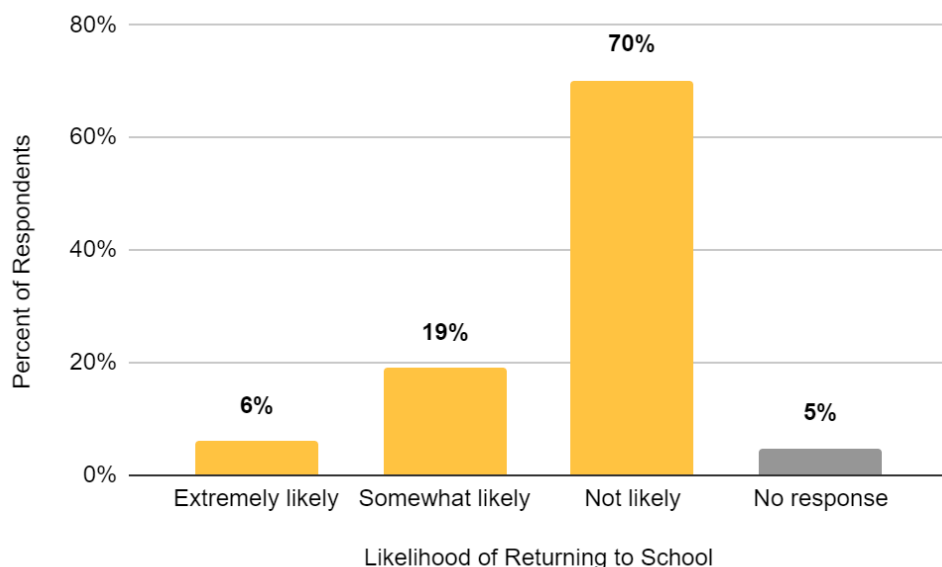
Participants were asked to indicate how likely they were to send their homeschooled children to their previous school or a new school and also had the option to explain their response.

“Not Likely”

Among currently homeschooling participants, most said they are not likely to return their child to school (70%).

Some of the reasons that participants shared for not returning their child to school include: their family’s enjoyment with homeschooling, distrust with the school system, and a belief in homeschooling as the best option for their child, particularly for children who had a high level of special needs or fell behind academically. Some participants also shared that they would wait until high school to consider public schooling, while a few participants had children who were already finishing school.

Chart 8. Likelihood of Homeschooled Children Returning to School (n=252)





“Somewhat Likely”

One out of five participants indicated that they are somewhat likely to return their child to their former school or a new school (19%).

Several of these respondents shared that they are actively searching for alternative schools or hybrid options. Some participants are also said that they are honoring their child’s choice for schooling and are open to continuing homeschooling if it fits their child's needs. A few participants said that they would re-enroll their children so they have more opportunities to socialize or to experience high school with others.

“Extremely Likely”

A few respondents said that it was extremely likely that they would re-enroll their child in their previous school or a new school (6%). Participants who explained their response mentioned that their child wanted to experience public schools or have more social interactions.

Reasons for Ending Homeschooling

Participants who were no longer homeschooling their children (n=68) were also asked to share their reasons for ending homeschooling. The most commonly shared reasons reflect a desire for parents to support their child’s decision to return to school, increase the amount of social interactions for their child, or have their child experience high school outside of the home. Some participants ended homeschooling due to changes in rules and restrictions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in their family’s life, or challenges they faced with homeschooling. A few participants also managed to identify programs and schools that were a better fit for their children.



Appendix A. Survey Instrument

Homeschool Survey

Participation in this survey is voluntary. Your answers will help us better support your needs.

1. How many school-age students (Kindergarten to 12th grade) are you currently homeschooling?

- ☐ 1 student
- ☐ 2 students
- ☐ 3 or more students
- ☐ None

1b. If you answered 'None', what was your primary reason for ending homeschooling?

2. Do you have any school-aged students who you are not homeschooling?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. What was your **primary** reason for enrolling your student(s) in homeschool? Please SELECT ONE option.

- ☐ COVID-19 Pandemic: health and safety concerns
- ☐ COVID-19 Pandemic: concerns with distance learning
- ☐ To better meet the needs of my child
- ☐ Disruptive or undesirable school environment
- ☐ Desire to control how and what my child learns
- ☐ Desire to align my child's education with our family's beliefs and views
- ☐ Homeschooling is better for our family's lifestyle
- ☐ Concerns about the school system (staff, class sizes, limited options, testing)
- ☐ Something else (please specify):

3b. If you have any additional reasons, please write them below.



4. What, if any supports, would you find useful from your resident district or MESD? Select all that apply.
- ☐ Information about homeschooling requirements and processes
 - ☐ Access to curriculum and other learning materials
 - ☐ Ideas for lesson plans and how to approach homeschooling
 - ☐ Information about homeschooling communities for knowledge sharing and community building
 - ☐ Opportunities for my child to engage in sports and after school activities
 - ☐ Access to school resources such as the library and assistive technology for students with disabilities
 - ☐ Something else (please specify):
5. How likely is it that your student(s) will return to their previous school or another school placement in the next academic year?
- ☐ Extremely likely: my student(s) will definitely return to their previous school or another school.
 - ☐ Somewhat likely: my student(s) might return to their previous school or another school.
 - ☐ Not likely: my student(s) will definitely NOT return to their previous school or another school.
- 5b. *Optional* Please explain your response to Question 5.
6. *Optional* Please list any homeschool organizations that you are a part of. If you are not a part of a homeschool organization, please indicate that as well.
7. Which school district do you currently live in?
- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| ☐ Centennial | ☐ Parkrose |
| ☐ Corbett | ☐ PPS |
| ☐ David Douglas | ☐ Reynolds |
| ☐ Gresham-Barlow | ☐ Riverdale |
| ☐ Other (please specify): _____ | |
8. *Optional* What is your child's race or ethnicity? Please check all that apply.
- ☐ American Indian/ Alaska Native
 - ☐ Asian
 - ☐ Black or African American
 - ☐ Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx
 - ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - ☐ White



- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Something else (please specify): _____

8b. If your children do not share the same racial or ethnic identity, please note how they identify below. (ex. child 1- Asian, child 2- Asian and White/multiracial).

9. *Optional* Do any of your homeschool children qualify for special education services?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Please return this form to the Multnomah Education Service District using the pre-addressed and stamped envelope provided.