

Why Not Advocate for More Money?

by Patty Marler

The home schooling scenery in Alberta is unique to our country and the world. We have options available to us in varying degrees and limits placed upon us in similarly varying degrees. The people home educating are a diverse group ranging from elite education seekers to Christian fundamentalists to secular ideologists to... you name it. Look inside the doors of any two home educating families, and I can guarantee you one thing: They will be different.

So, where does this leave us at AHEA? What is our role?

Advocacy

The primary reason for the establishment of AHEA was to be a collective unified voice for home educators. The adage 'United we stand' is an important one when we present our desires and concerns for home education. The collective voice is stronger than individuals yelling independently.

The challenge, therefore, is how does one organization represent so many unique positions? The answer is to represent our commonality, the tie which draws us together, the characteristic which make us unique: that we, as parents, have assumed the responsibility to home educate our children.

There are a large number of groups and individuals advocating for government control over education. The Department of Education, the Alberta Teacher's Association, and even your neighbour who states "Don't your children have to do mandatory testing?" are all advocating for public, externally-controlled, government-mandated testing and education of your children. AHEA is the main voice in Alberta advocating for the rights of the parents to *control the education of their children*.

This is the base position which AHEA represents, the rights of parents to educate without government control. We advocate for the rights of parents to design, implement and evaluate the educational program of their students without intervention by government regulations. We lobby for less government involvement and more autonomy for families. We call for less regulation, and we will work hard to have legislative rules and bureaucracy reduced. AHEA advocates for home educators by encouraging less government control.

In face-to-face discussions with Ministers of Education, AHEA has heard directly from Ministers and educational planners that increased funding results in increased controls. Therefore, AHEA cannot in good conscience compromise the fundamental principle of autonomy for parents in education by requesting more money in the form of funding for home education from our government. A request for more money is equivalent to requesting more control, and AHEA will not fight for more control on behalf of Alberta Home Educators.

Similarly, AHEA will not encourage or promote government-prepared programming designed for home education. This is consistent with the Home School Legal Defence of Canada statement: "*We do not believe that a government has a right to prescribe or proscribe a detailed course of study such as a provincial curriculum. This also means that any test that requires a detailed knowledge of any one curriculum will also violate this parental right, since it would require parents to teach a certain curriculum in order for their children to succeed in such a test.*" Parents may choose the curriculum which best suits the needs of their children, but AHEA will not request any government involvement in preparing programming for home educators. Our narrow advocacy philosophy is our way of supporting ALL homeschoolers. Staying the course of advocating for limited government involvement makes it easier for all homeschoolers. Increasing controls on home education, the most flexible form of homeschooling (i.e. home education as defined by the Home Education Regulation), would ripple down and make it easier for government to place increased restrictions on other forms of homeschooling, including education that consists partly of home education (i.e. blended). By keeping a very focused and narrow line of advocacy, AHEA is striving to help all homeschoolers, including those who opt for government control over a portion of their children's education.

AHEA will continue to advocate for minimal governmental involvement and intrusion in home education and to promote the autonomy of home educating families. This is our advocacy role.

Supporting Home Educators

While AHEA advocates for minimal government control, people may individually choose whichever form of home schooling they would like. AHEA will provide information to individuals to help them make informed decisions, but AHEA will not tell individuals

how to home school or which curriculum to choose. We provide exhibitors at our convention who serve families with a diverse range of programming choices and options, and we advertise support groups of various ideologies on our website. Individuals come to the AHEA convention with various philosophies and backgrounds, and we welcome all who come. AHEA provides information on what it means philosophically and economically to make each of the various choices, but ultimately you as the parent make those decisions.

As part of our support mandate, AHEA provides regular blog updates supporting home educators in their journey. Terry Yac-eyko, our Support Group Liaison, is passionate about supporting mothers and takes this job very seriously. AHEA believes strongly in providing a network for home educating parents so no family needs to be an island. Our speakers are chosen carefully to offer support, encouragement, and experiential guidance. These are the supportive methods which AHEA takes.

Conclusion

The ideology of parental authority and autonomy has led AHEA to a narrow advocacy mandate. The result is supporting all parents who choose to home educate their children by reducing the amount of mandated external influence on their home education. AHEA encourages parents to research their options and make informed decisions on the education of their children.



Patty is a home educating wife of 23 years to Jeff and mother of 4 children. Her children have always been home educated and their eldest graduated in May 2011 with the fruits of their efforts becoming apparent. She has an understanding of legislative acts, regulations and policies through previous employment as well as conference administrative experience. She is passionate about sharing the benefits of home education with others and advocating for the rights of home educators with policy makers. God has placed her in locations where she has had the privilege of sharing the spirit, philosophies and ideologies of home education with government leaders as well as praying with and for government leaders. Patty plans on continuing to push forward for home educators.