

SCHOOLED AT HOME

School

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Some parents say institutions of higher learning are behind the times when it comes to admitting and accepting students who have been home-schooled. Some of these students don't have a standardized set of grades, letters of recommendation and school sponsored extracurricular activities like traditional students. But home-school parents still must meet requirements set by states.

In Utah, parents who home-school their children are required to provide 180 days of instruction in core subjects just like public schools, but have much more leeway in the types of activities being offered. Some families choose to use pre-made curricula that provides students with access to teachers, graded papers and grades, while others choose to use the resources of the community and judge their student's performance on their own.

Admissions hurdles

Travis Blackwelder, BYU's associate dean for admissions, said the school accepts students with different backgrounds.

"First of all, we value that experience," Blackwelder said.

Still, the standards for admittance are higher if a student doesn't have a standardized grade point average.

"That just means that the standardized test is magnified in its importance," Blackwelder said.

Home-schooled students are asked to have an ACT score of at least 27, if they don't have a valid GPA, meaning one not standardized by an organization. Some home-schooled students have

GPA's because they are enrolled in programs that provide grades. Scholarships also are more difficult to attain for home-schoolers, with academic scholarships at BYU based on ACT scores. Traditional students are given a half-tuition scholarship with a score of 29. Home-schooled students will be awarded half-tuition scholarships with a score of 31.

At UVSC, the requirements aren't as stringent. Michelle Lundell, UVSC's associate vice president of student services, said students who have been home-schooled are treated like other students. They are required to take the ACT or the ACT Residual Test as a placement test, unless the students are registering for concurrent enrollment, where they receive high school credit as well as credit toward a college degree. The only difference concerns scholarships. UVSC requires students to take the GED so they can translate it to a GPA.

"We really don't have any other way to do it," Lundell said.

According to the Home School Legal Defense Association, the situation for home-schooled students got better with the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1998, which prohibited colleges that receive federal funds from requiring students to take the GED to qualify for financial aid.

Still, challenges persist. The National Center for Home Education recommends that colleges adopt policies that don't require students to take any extra standardized tests and score higher than applicants that have been educated publicly and privately. It also recommends that students not be required to take the GED because the test carries the stigma of a high school drop-out. It recommends a bibliography of high school literature, an essay and an interview as a means

to gauge a student's abilities. Jon Yarrington, president of the Utah Home Education Association, educated his three children at home.

All three have gone to college. His second daughter attended Salt Lake Community College in lieu of high school, earning her associate degree by age 18. None of Yarrington's children have had to fight to be admitted to their programs.

Strengths

Brittany Toledo, 23, is a UVSC alumna, mom and freelance writer. She graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree after completing her high school work independently at home.

"My parents decided they felt that I could do better academically without ... distraction," Toledo said.

She said she completed courses sent to her in the mail and corresponded with teachers, without traditional classes. But she had a hard time finding outside activities to give her the same types of extracurricular experiences available to students at schools. She ended up participating in leadership and outdoor activities like learning survival and life-saving skills at a camp in Vermont.

Administrators at UVSC and BYU say they want home-schooled students on their campuses because they have different experiences and make great college students.

Blackwelder said some students who have been home-schooled have impressive credentials outside of scores and grades. Many have impressive volunteer and leadership experience that goes above and beyond that offered in public school.

Many home-schooled students do well in college because they already have college-level skills, Yarrington said.

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school, nothing like public school," Yarrington said.

Lundell said many home-schooled students are focused on learning.

"They are students that are highly motivated," Lundell said. "They are very serious about higher education and their family is very serious about their education."

Social Skills

Toledo focused on higher education while still completing her high school studies, received scholarships to every college she applied to and had an ACT score of 28. But that didn't make adjusting to college life any easier.

One problem Toledo had was the change in environment. When she first started college, she took classes via BYU independent study. She transferred to UVSC because she liked the open environment better but challenges still persisted.

"I could handle the course work. I had skills that most kids didn't. I had trouble with the actually going to class," Toledo said. "I think that was a huge transitional issue for me." Toledo said she eased into the

social environment by taking night and weekend classes and eventually got used to it.

The schools say their students from home-school backgrounds do well despite the stereotype.

"Our home-schooled students seem to succeed in and out of the classroom," Blackwelder said. "We just rarely hear of folks who come and struggle socially."

Toledo said learning at home gave her more discipline, and a love of learning, but learning in a group has perks, too.

"I liked the interactive atmosphere," Toledo said.

She could learn different aspects of the same material by listening to someone else's viewpoint.

Toledo said she hasn't decided whether to home-school her own children or send them to public school. She said that will depend on the learning style of the child, but no matter what, she plans to be creative and hands-on in their education.

► **Brittani Lusk** can be reached at 344-2549 or at blusk@heraldextra.com.

Malibu

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Forty-nine homes were destroyed, 27 others were damaged, and 10,000 to 14,000 people evacuated, said Los Angeles County Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman.

The fire erupted shortly before in the wee hours after long-predicted Santa Ana winds finally arrived, and it quickly grew before the winds died down. By midafternoon it was not even half contained.

"Waking up at 4 in the morning with the smell of smoke in your nose and the wind beating at the windows is something that we learn to live with here, but it always comes as something of a shock," said Mayor Jeff Jennings.

Helicopters and airplanes, including a retardant-dropping DC-10 jumbo jet, attacked from the air, while hundreds of firefighters battled flames on the ground. Six firefighters suffered minor injuries.

"It's great to be able to say that we have no loss of lives," Jennings said.

Helicopters lowered hoses into pools and the nearby Pacific to refill their tanks for water-dropping runs, and SuperScooper amphibious airplanes skimmed the ocean to reload.

Hundreds of firefighters and equipment from throughout the state had been positioned in Southern California for most of the week because of the winds, which had been expected to blow most of the week but didn't arrive until late Friday.

Officials remained wary despite the decrease in wind speed.

The mayor urged residents to "listen to your radios, go outside and see which way the wind is blowing. Stay alert. Stay vigilant."

The Malibu fire broke out along a dirt road off a paved highway and there did not appear to be power lines in the area, Freeman said. Investigators were trying to determine the cause, he said.

A hotspot flared for a time on several ridges behind Pep-



Smoke billows above Zuma Beach and Pacific Coast Highway in the hills above Malibu, Calif., on Saturday as a fast moving wildfire destroyed dozens of homes and spread through the canyons and hills forcing thousands of residents to evacuate.

perdine University, but the campus did not appear to have been endangered. Helicopters used its broad oceanview lawn as a landing zone.

University officials told students to move to a campus shelter as a precaution, although the school remained largely empty because of the holiday weekend.

Another fire near Ramona in San Diego County was fully contained at 50 acres. A firefighter suffered a minor cut when an air tanker dropped heavy retardant on a fire engine, breaking its windshield.

Power lines blown down by fierce winds caused last month's fire in Malibu, which destroyed six homes, two businesses and a church. That blaze was part of siege of more than 15 Santa Ana-stoked wildfires that destroyed more than 2,000 homes, killed 14 people and blackened a total of 809 square miles from Los Angeles Coun-

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ty to the Mexican border.

Santa Anas, triggered by high pressure over the Great Basin, blow into Southern California from the north and northeast, racing down through the canyons and passes of the region's east-west mountain ranges and out to

sea, pushing back the normal flow of moist ocean air.

Malibu, with homes tucked into deep, narrow canyons along 27 miles of coast at the southern foot of the Santa Monica Mountains, is prone to Santa Ana-driven wildfires. One blaze in 1993 destroyed 388 structures, including 268 homes, and killed three people.

Saturday's fire burned to the west of the portions of Malibu that burned in October.

Neighbors alerted one another, while authorities drove through Corral Canyon, a neighborhood of about 350 homes, telling people to leave.

Meredith Lobel-Angel, 51, and her husband Frank Angel, 54, said they had seen that her wooden \$2 million home had burned to the foundation. Appearing in shock, she said she was numb.

► **AP writer Noaki Schwartz** in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

up the canyon on the ridge (about a mile away)," Frank Angel said. "By the time we evacuated it was already over the ridge. It spread faster than I've ever seen it."

Carol Stoddard, 48, a freelance videographer and photographer, captured some of the fire's destruction as trees beside her home and her collection of 12 uninsured cars burned.

"I stayed there until I couldn't breathe and the embers were flying everywhere," she said. "It was dark and I was standing around my house. I couldn't see. I couldn't grab enough stuff that was of importance like my passport."

She later returned to find that her wooden \$2 million home had burned to the foundation. Appearing in shock, she said she was numb.

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Airport

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The decision has volunteers scratching their heads.

"It's like that thing where two kids were fighting for the toy so now nobody gets it," laments Alan Kaizumi, a member of the rescue mission's recovery program. "They just throw it straight in the Dumpster now."

While it lasted, the program gave one local rescue mission more than 300 beverages a week and up to 500 hygiene items. About 150 homeless use the mission three times weekly to bathe. Other charities and local food banks also got the goods.

The idea was growing in popularity, with other airports expressing interest in following Salt Lake's example.

But officials said security workers never felt comfortable redistributing the confiscated items.

"Nobody knows what they are ... even though they were sealed," says Nico Melendez, spokesman for TSA's national office. "You are talking about thousands of items collected each day. If we could continue it, we certainly would. But all it would take is just one item that could be a harm to somebody that would be a huge liability to this organization and the taxpayers."

Brady Snyder, a rescue mission manager, said the program provided humanitarian help and an environmental benefit by keeping the items out of the landfill. He doesn't buy the security risk excuse, saying the idea of a poisoned Sprite or a toothpaste bomb is over blown.

Had TSA asked, local charities would have been willing to sign waivers releasing the agency from responsibility, Snyder said. The change also will hurt the bottom line. Many agencies won't be able to afford to replace the items now lost to the landfill.

"It was a very innovative and effective program developed by people who saw a lot of waste happening," said Snyder. "It frustrates me."

Australia

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Australia's 550 combat troops from Iraq in a phased withdrawal, and to quickly sign Kyoto. Howard had rejected withdrawal plans for Australia's troops in Iraq, and refused to ratify the pact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"Today the Australian people have decided that we as a nation will move forward," Rudd said in a victory speech before hundreds of cheering supporters in his home state of Queensland. "To plan for the future, to prepare for the future, to embrace the future and together as Australians to unite and write a new page in our nation's history."

Australia is the latest coun-

try to see elections turn out governments that contributed to the U.S. war in Iraq.

Poland's new prime minister, Donald Tusk, has vowed to take a firmer stand in relations with the United States. He said in his inaugural address Friday that by the end of next year Poland would withdraw its 900 troops from Iraq, where it leads an international contingent of about 2,000 soldiers from 10 nations in the south-central part of the country.

Howard, 68, had stayed in to fight for a fifth term in office despite months of negative opinion poll numbers and appeals from some colleagues to quit. He took the blame for his government's defeat.

"I accept full responsibility for the Liberal Party campaign, and I therefore accept full re-

sponsibility for the coalition's defeat in this election campaign," Howard said in his concession speech in Sydney.

He said it appeared "very likely" he would lose his seat in Parliament to former television journalist Maxine McKew.

Rudd's Labor Party had more than 53 percent of the vote with over 75 percent of ballots counted, compared to 46.8 percent for Howard's coalition, according to the Australian Electoral Commission.

An Australian Broadcasting Corp. analysis showed that Labor would get at least 81 places in the 150-seat lower house of Parliament — a clear majority.

Rudd, who was expected to be sworn in as prime minister in the coming week, had accused Howard of being out of touch with modern Australia

and ill-prepared to deal with issues such as climate change and high-speed Internet.

Few in Rudd's team have any federal government experience. Rudd has more experience in foreign policy than any other area of government, and was expected to adopt a nuanced, non-confrontational approach to diplomacy. He sent "greetings ... to our great friend and ally the United States" in his victory speech.

The Bush administration congratulated Rudd.

"The United States and Australia have long been strong partners and allies and the president looks forward to working with this new government to continue our historic relationship," said White House spokeswoman Emily Lawrimore.



RICK RYCKROFT/Associated Press

Australia's outgoing Prime Minister John Howard [right] grasps his wife Janette's hand as he makes his concession speech following the federal election Saturday in Sydney, Australia.