

## **Safeguarding Home education freedoms at the Local Level**

Most parents do not have the opportunity to tackle the issue of safeguarding home education freedoms at the state legislative level. However, many parents have been involved on the local level, and most counties in Florida have their own home education pioneers. Those pioneers have eased the way for local families to take full advantage of the unique educational choice that home education represents. They have also set examples for us to follow in approaching area challenges to home education freedoms, should the need arise.

Challenges faced on local levels have been varied, and so have the perspectives and methods used by home-educating parents who have addressed them. There are several elements, though, that seem to be common to a successful outcome.

### **Knowledge**

Making decisions based on assumptions or on someone else's perceptions of events will not help your cause. Make certain you know the what, how, when, and where of the situation. Discover which official needs to be approached. Once you find that out, make yourself aware of who his superior is and how the chain of command works in his office. Above all make sure of the facts involved in the challenge you face. Do the legwork before deciding on a course of action. Few things damage your credibility in the eyes of an official more than asking for action concerning an unsubstantiated position. An official cannot do much to rectify a poorly outlined problem. Feelings and emotion won't hold much weight but facts will, and having them at your fingertips often places you in a position of strength.

### **Networking**

The dictionary defines networking as: *"An extended group of people with similar interests or concerns who interact and remain in informal contact for mutual assistance or support."* Home-educators tend to stay in touch with others home-educators. Despite differences in philosophies and methodologies home-educating parents who have been successful in helping to safeguard freedoms on the local level are inclined to network. They communicate their concerns and possible strategies for action with other home-educating parents in the community. They brainstorm ideas and share information, which often results in successful actions. The old adage, two heads are better than one, is a worthwhile saying.

## **Respect**

No matter how a challenge of home-education freedoms originates, a respectful approach has proven to be an important factor in resolution. Showing regard for another person's viewpoint often opens doors to success where a more in-your-face approach might end in failure. That doesn't mean you cannot be firm. In fact, a firm request handled with consideration has a proven track record in achieving the goal of maintaining home education freedoms.

## **Follow Through**

Some challenges can be resolved with a single meeting. Others will mean several meetings, either in person or on the phone. If your goal is a positive end result for home education freedoms, then you may need to stick with it until the action is successful. Many local pioneers committed themselves to whatever subsequent actions were needed in order to maintain home education freedoms. They have left us a wonderful legacy to follow.

## **Summary**

If there is a challenge to home education freedoms in your area, your own actions could greatly help in obtaining a positive resolution. Do your homework and gather the facts about the situation. Network with others in your community and only then make a decision about what action to take. Find out which official to meet with and use a firm but considerate approach. Finally, don't be afraid to follow up until a successful conclusion is obtained.

These have been common elements in past victories for securing and maintaining home education freedoms. By using them as a framework, you may well leave your own legacy of safeguarding freedoms for families in your local community