



30 Years of the National Home Education Research Institute

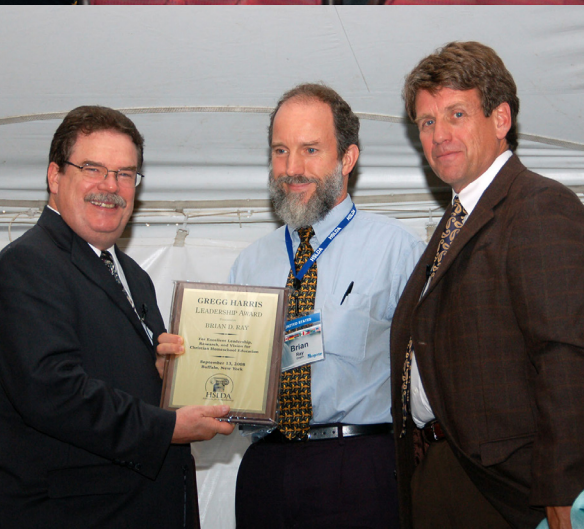
BY REBECCA RAY



As a 27-year-old graduate of home education, I often take my freedom to home-school my own children someday for granted. I'm just young enough that I don't remember the risk or fear many families experienced just by simply choosing to raise their children in the way they saw fit. Sadly, I think that I'm not alone. How many parents and students today that enjoy the comparative freedom to choose personalized education in America don't appreciate the years of toil to bring it about?

Additionally, if we are aware of the effort put into establishing our freedom to choose our children's education, many of us think about the legislators, lawyers, and court cases. Up until more recently, it simply didn't occur to me that in order for those lawyers to present their evidence to legislative assemblies and courts, this evidence would need to be gathered and summarized by someone. That's where the oft-overlooked National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) comes in. Since 1985, Dr. Brian Ray has been publishing his journal *The Home School Researcher*, which has been peer-reviewed for many years. In 1990, 30 years ago, NHERI was founded by a group of forward-looking men and Dr. Ray published his first nationwide study of homeschooling, the first of its kind in history.

Also in 1990, the president of NHERI, Dr. Ray, began testifying as an expert witness in court cases defending home education. He also began testifying to legislatures at the request of legislators and homeschool organizations. His research and testimony over the years has been used in countless cases to give you the ability to enjoy the freedom of educational choice you experience today. HSLDA (Home School Legal Defense Association) President Mike Smith said, "HSLDA has lost track of how many times Brian Ray has been called on to help establish the validity and success of homeschooling in court rooms and legislatures around the country. We are so grateful for his expert testimony in court on behalf of homeschooling families."



Maybe you have heard something like this factual tidbit: Homeschool students score 15 to 30 percentile points higher on achievement tests, on average, than their public-school peers. It's been cited in countless news stories online and in print, in interviews, legislative hearings, and court cases. But where do these statistics and other facts come from? They have been surveyed, compiled, and/or reviewed by NHERI over the past three decades. Check out the research at www.nheri.org/research.

Thirty years into NHERI's service, we still need good solid research. People need empirical evidence on why home education continues to be a viable choice for parents in every state. Homeschooling has been around long enough that the arguments against it are now changing from the typical "what about socialization?" and "will they be successful?" to "what about child abuse?" and "what about minorities?" The research must now come to reflect that change. Even as the arguments against educational freedom change from socialization and academic success to other topics, so now the research must reflect that change.

Nations as far-flung as Japan, Poland, Columbia, Russia, and South Africa have benefited from NHERI's work. The ability to homeschool in many nations and the public's perception of home education has been significantly influenced by the work and research of NHERI. States across the nation, ranging from Oregon to Massachusetts and Ohio to Texas, have been served by NHERI. NHERI continues to travel across the world and the United States, presenting solid facts and defending the right of parents everywhere to choose the form of education they deem best for their child. For example, in January of this year, Dr. Ray was the sole supporter of fundamental home-education rights in a broadcast by National Public Radio (NPR) on homeschool regulation.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of NHERI, let's reflect on all the work of those who have paved the way before us. Let's not let their work be forgotten, or even undone as we sit back and enjoy these freedoms. Let's not assume that things will go on as they are now or continue to get better. Let's carry the torch of freedom in the realm of parental rights and educational choice throughout our communities and to the world. Let's stay vigilant and persevere.

You can stay up to date on the latest research, read hundreds of research works, and support the work of NHERI at www.nheri.org.

