Far Star Action Fund: Homeschooling overview
The target outcome of this project is to better understand the homeschool landscape to develop an informed plan to reach homeschool students

Foundational questions:

What does homeschool look like today?

What can Far Star Action Fund offer/provide to homeschool students?

How can Far Star most effectively reach these communities?

Goals:

Define homeschooling and characterize the current dynamics, participants and trends

Understand the broad educational desires of homeschool families/children

Evaluate the best distribution channels for amplifying the message of Far Star films amongst homeschooled communities
Agenda

• Homeschooling overview: “What does homeschool look like today?”
  • History
  • Growth
  • Requirements
  • School types

• Homeschool organizations: “What types of groups or organizations do homeschooled families most commonly interact with?”
  • Types of organizations
  • Pathways to partnership
Following its legalization in the 1970s, the rate of homeschooling has grown steadily among U.S. families, spiking in 2020 due to the pandemic.

- 1970s: Homeschooling movement begins driven by parent’s desire for greater control over educational content and quality.
- 1972: Supreme Court upholds parents right to homeschool children given religious motivations.
  - For many years, religious motivations were the primary driver of homeschooling.
- 1993: Homeschooling is legalized in all 50 states.
- 1990 – 2000: Growth in homeschooled students fuels development of advocacy networks and growing lobbying power.
- 2020: COVID pandemic disrupts traditional schooling methods for millions, pushing many parents to explore alternative education paths.
The pandemic significantly accelerated a shift towards homeschooling, particularly among certain demographics

- The pandemic fueled a shift to home education as parents sought alternatives to online education
  - From Spring 2020 to Fall 2020 homeschooled students grew from 3% to 11% of the population
  - The longevity of this shift remains unclear, but experts anticipate continued use of digital or hybrid learning options

- Demographics: This shift to homeschooling was most pronounced in Black and Hispanic families, who cited pervasive racism and discrimination as a primary driver of adoption
  - However, even prior to the pandemic 41% of homeschooling students were non-white (e.g., Black, Asian, Hispanic)^

- Geography*: Certain geographies saw outsized growth of homeschooling with 5 states seeing growth over 11% (AL, FL, MI, OK, VT, WV)

Sources: ^ https://www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling; *https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/homeschooling-on-the-rise-during-covid-19-pandemic.html; Bellweather Education Fund; The Daily Gazette
The shift towards homeschooling was fueled by a shift out of both public and private schools, and primarily driven by middle-and-lower-income families.

- Both public and private schools saw significant decreases in enrollment during the pandemic.
  - Parents primarily cited the attractiveness of alternative learning formats (e.g., mixed, online, or in-person) and better ability to meet a child’s well-being and mental health as reasons for shift to homeschooling.
  - Lower-income parents cited learning format (e.g., online or in-person) as the primary cause of switching.

- Middle-and low-income parents were the fastest growing segment in homeschooling during the pandemic.
  - However, lower-income families generally perceived homeschooling as “free” and did not spend money to support it, suggesting educational quality may have suffered in the shift.

- Similarly, families in rural areas saw greater shift towards homeschooling than urban or suburban zones.
  - These areas are often lower-income and may speak to parents limited options to pursue more costly alternatives like private education or learning pods.

Sources: Tyton Partners “School Disrupted: The Impact of COVID-19 on Parent Agency and the K-12 Ecosystem”
Homeschool requirements vary significantly by state; most require notification and record keeping while few require teacher certification.

- The level of homeschool regulation usually varies across 4 categories in control and standards:

  - **Teacher qualification requirements:** 12/50 states
  - **Standardized testing:** 19/50 states (12 annual, 7 states periodic)
  - **Curriculum standards:** 33 state*
  - **Notification, record keeping, reporting:** 40/50

*Less common: most states unregulated

*More common: most states have regulations

Notes: *Few states with curriculum control in place have means or systems to check curriculum is being taught.
Most homeschooling is conducted under 4 models: Virtual charter schools, micro-schools, learning pods, or individual instruction

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Curriculum sources</th>
<th>Teaching agents</th>
<th>Example orgs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Public virtual charter school:</td>
<td>For-profit online or blended schools which function as alternatives to traditional public education</td>
<td>• Receive government funding • Est. $10,000 per student</td>
<td>Developed internally</td>
<td>Blend of self-teaching and support from on-staff ‘guides/coaches’</td>
<td>• K12, Inc (Stride) • Connections Academy by Pearson</td>
<td>Tyton Partners; Bellweather Education Fund</td>
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<td>Micro-schools:</td>
<td>Small, independent schools characterized by size and structure; often facilitated by for-profit micro-school networks</td>
<td>• Commonly funded by families, certain states have provided public funding • Est. $5,000 per student</td>
<td>- Internally developed - Leverage online learning resources (e.g., Khan Academy)</td>
<td>Blend of self-teaching and instruction from professional teachers</td>
<td>• Prenda Learning • My HighTech • Acta Academy • Wildflower Schools</td>
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<td>Learning pods:</td>
<td>Small groups of school-age children learning in tandem; may be used as a supplement to traditional school</td>
<td>Funded by families</td>
<td>- Common to utilize online resources or curricula providers (e.g., Khan Academy, ABCMouse)</td>
<td>- Parents - Hired professional tutors, teachers, coaches</td>
<td>Facilitators: • Get Selected • Facebook groups</td>
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<td>Individual (family) instruction:</td>
<td>Children receive primary instruction at home usually led by a parent or caretaker</td>
<td>Funded by families</td>
<td>- Online - Self-developed - Sourced from religious or cultural organization</td>
<td>- Parents</td>
<td>• N / A</td>
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There are a variety of institutions which regularly interface with homeschool families; Far Star could potentially partner with any of these organizations:

- **Schools**: Schools which support or facilitate alternative learning (e.g., public charter, micro-schools).
- **Facilitators**: Companies which connect homeschooled individuals to resources (e.g., learning pods, teachers).
- **Home school interest groups**: Non-profit organizations focused on supporting and advocating for alternative learning / homeschool models.
- **Online learning / curricula providers**: Online academic resources providing classes, learning plans, or curricula.
- **Social networks**: Online groups on social platforms (e.g., Facebook) which provide social support and resource recommendations.
- **Media**: News and journals produced for individuals interested or active in homeschooling.
The choice of a homeschool-affiliated partner institution will likely be influenced by the type of educational experience Far Star looks to provide.

Decision making pathway:

- Deliver films coupled with educational materials
- Depend on partner for academic material development
- Develop curricula / educational plans internally
- Provide film access with no supporting materials

Partner with curricula developers / distributors:
- Schools
- Home school interest groups
- Online learning / curricula providers

Spread message through online groups:
- Social networks
- Media
- Facilitators
It may be valuable to partner with institutions which develop curriculum to reach a broad audience of homeschooled children

**Definition:**
Small groups of school-age children learning in tandem; may be used as a supplement to traditional school

**Examples:**
- K12, Inc.
- Connections Academy (Pearson)
- Khan Academy
- ABCMouse
- Emile School
- Outschool
- Tinkergarten
- Seton Home Study^ School
- Sonlight^ School
- Black Home educators Fund*
- Environmental Scouts*
- Bellweather Foundation
- Legal Aid Funds (e.g., HomeSchool Legal Defense Fund)
- Lobbyist groups

**Volume / reach:**
- K12, Inc: 170,000
- Connections Academy (Pearson): 100,000
- Khan Academy: 48 million
- Outschool: 300,000
- Seton Home Study^: 20,000
- Black Home Educators Fund*: 35,000

**Partnership potential:**
Partner with large curriculum developing organizations to access broad network and put Far Star Films into more online / homeschooled curriculums

Note: ^Indicates religious focus *Indicates cultural focus
Partnering with existing online networks and resource distributors may be ideal if Far Star films is looking to amplify its message in these communities.

**Definition:**
- **Facilitators:** Organizations which provide structure or facilitate connection for parents operating homeschools
- **Media:** Online class providers, many are specialized for certain grade levels, learning styles, or interests (e.g., religious, cultural)
- **Social networks:** Online resources which provide social support and resource recommendations (e.g., Facebook groups) for parents and teachers

**Examples:**
- Wonderschool
- Swing Education
- Newsletters: Growing without Schooling, Seattle Homeschool Group
- News: Education Week, Chalkbeat, eSchool News
- Pandemic pod Facebook group

**Volume / reach:**
- Not available
- Not available
- Pandemic pod: 40,000

**Partnership potential:**
Use social networks or HS focused-media orgs. to advertise Far Star films to homeschooled families

*Note: ^Indicates religious focus *Indicates cultural focus*