

## Story Idea: *Homeschooling by Necessity, Not Choice*

**Contact:** Kimberli Meadows, 301-918-3747, [kmeadows@efa.org](mailto:kmeadows@efa.org)

Homeschooling often evokes thoughts about the fringe elements of society, particularly of the ultra religious—but those thoughts are fueled by the notion that parents have a *choice* about whether or not to homeschool their children. People wrongfully assume parents simply want to shield their children, instead of understanding that some schools can't—or won't—provide equal and adequate schooling and services to all students.

Although various legislative acts ensure that students with disabilities receive a “free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive setting,” many schools fight against administering potentially life-saving medications and will advise parents that only the nurse can administer the medication, and, in some schools, the nurse is only in school on Fridays and never on field trips.

Or the schools might pigeonhole a student in a special education class that is far below the student's levels in several, many, or all areas, simply because the school doesn't want to take the time or spend the money to find the legally mandated “least restrictive setting.”

When a school won't acknowledge or follow its legal responsibilities, parents can fight the school, the teachers, and the school district. Sometimes the parents are victorious. At other times, frustrated and defeated, the parents decide it is simply easier, better and safer to take their “medically challenged” child or children out of school and educate them at home themselves—and, in fact, right now, parents have a lot of help when they want to do so. Growing homeschooling associations and companies aid these parents by providing legal aid, extensive curriculums, and other options, while some public school systems have developed cottage schools to allow parents to enroll their homeschooled children in as few or many classes as they'd like, to supplement what they themselves can teach at home.

Meanwhile, according to one teacher, with some quality one-on-one time, some previously failing students can go on to soak up knowledge like sponges.

### Story Resources

- *Epilepsy Facts and Figures* information sheet.
- *KSU Fact Sheet*.
- *Communicating About Epilepsy* information sheet.
- [District found liable in boy's paralysis; L.A. Unified is ordered to pay \\$7.6 million for an incident in which the child had a seizure on campus and subsequent CPR was ineffective.](#)
- [Home School Legal Defense Association.](#)
- **The Epilepsy Index**, an educational Web resource for general epilepsy information, [www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/index.cfm](http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/index.cfm).

### Suggested Interview Questions

- What is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and what does it cover?
- What is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and what does it cover?

- What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how is it relevant to children with epilepsy in schools today?
- What types of accommodations might a child with epilepsy need in school?
- What are some of the issues children with epilepsy have dealt with in schools?
- What are all the reasons a particular parent chooses to homeschool?
- What curriculums do parents use?
- How do the parents ensure their children are being properly socialized?
- If someone experiences a seizure what should be done?
- What should NOT be done if you see someone experiencing a seizure?
- How can you tell if someone is experiencing a seizure?

### Fast Facts

- Epilepsy is the most common neurological condition in children.
- More than 3 million people in the U.S. have some form of epilepsy. Thirty percent of them are children under the age of 18. A large number of children and adults have undetected or untreated epilepsy.
- Epilepsy primarily affects the very young and the very old, although anyone can get epilepsy at anytime. Twenty percent of cases develop before the age of five. Fifty percent develop before the age of 25.
- Epilepsy is the third most common neurological disorder in the United States after Alzheimer's disease and stroke. It is equal in prevalence to cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease combined.
- According to the U.S. Department of Education, in the spring of 2003, approximately 1,096,000 students were being homeschooled in the U.S.—reflecting a 29 percent increase in four years.
- In 1999, 1.7 percent of all school-aged children were being homeschooled, with 2.2 percent being homeschooled in 2003.

### Interview Opportunities

- Eric Hargis, president and CEO, the Epilepsy Foundation.
- Physician specialist.
- Child with epilepsy who is being homeschooled.
- Parent who is homeschooling child because of child's epilepsy.

**Comment [KM1]:** Should the periods be deleted.

### About the Epilepsy Foundation

The Epilepsy Foundation, a national non-profit with affiliated organizations throughout the United States, has led the fight against epilepsy since 1968. The Foundation's goals are to ensure that people with seizures are able to participate in all life experiences; and prevent, control and cure epilepsy through services, education, advocacy and research, so not another moment is lost to seizures. For additional information, please visit [www.epilepsyfoundation.org](http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org).