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A letter supporting legalizing home/un-schooling in Austria

By Naomi Aldort

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*Published in 19 languages. Aldort's parenting advice columns and articles are published internationally. She is a renowned public speaker and authority on parenting and self-directed education.*

To whom it may concern,

In the USA un-schooling or self-directed learning is legal and possible as part of respecting individual freedom. But there is another reason for it: This way of education results in some of the most productive, successful citizens and excelling students in top universities and in the professional world. There are many studies and statistics that have proven this fact repeatedly, including many youth academic contests regularly won by very young unschooled contestants.

Children and youth who are allowed to learn on their own in a nurturing family and community environment (with the support of their parents, communities, and chosen mentors) become successful, confident, motivated and responsible adults with solid social and academic skills. They live in the real society all their lives and pursue their passions from a much younger age. In many USA states, the school system sometimes even provides funds and resources for un-schoolers and home schoolers - free of charge.

Besides all the studies and excellent statistics, I can speak from my own experience with hundreds and thousands of families over 25 years, whose now adult sons and daughter flourish and contribute to society in measurable ways. In addition, my three sons (now professional and competent adults) never went to school. While not attending school they won top national competitions and accomplished way beyond their ages, including in composing, conducting public orchestras, and being soloists with orchestras.

All three sons were top students in excellent universities and graduated with honors. Two started universities at the ages of 16. This is common among un-schoolers as going their own pace usually means faster learning, without the slowing down that results from the limitations caused by groups and classrooms.

There are unschoolers who start college at 12 and work on their Ph.D. in their late teens.

Our youngest son went at age 16 to Curtis Institute of Music, considered one of the best music schools in the world and hardest to get into. (only 170 students so only few new students get in each year.) He graduated with academic top honors and was accepted to two top orchestras at age 20, one of which, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, he becomes a member of and now the assistant principal cellist.

As adults these three engage in social work, community leadership, public speaking, writing, teaching, building, are politically engaged, and have healthy relationships with friends, teachers, and colleagues. But these are just three examples the details of which I happen to personally know. There are millions such stories in the USA and Canada; some Harvard graduates (who never went to school) have written books about them, but most simply live productive and mostly highly educated lives and are socially and emotionally rooted in themselves and confident. Nothing is always shiny and perfect for everyone, but so it is with schooling. In fact the statistics of home education by far surpass the results of schooled children. I have been working with families all over the world, so I can clearly see and state: Un-schooling is a valuable way of education that benefits the students and society.

I see Austria as a progressive country that is ready to embrace diverse educational opportunities for diverse young human beings and families. I therefore recommend that this kind of education be made legal in Austria as soon as possible so the children of today who need this approach, can benefit from it right now. For such children, school can actually cause harm and thwart their confidence, creativity and motivation. The statistics for such harm are plentiful and worth paying attention to.

I am therefore happy to support the paper of the „Austrian society for the promotion of free and self-directed learning” in its quest to promote self-directed leaning in Austria.

Sincerely,

Naomi Aldort

Author, parenting teacher, public speaker, columnist and author