

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **Defining Hybrid Homeschools in America: Little Platoons**

**By Eric Wearne**

**2021**

**151 Pages**

**978-1-7936-0633-4 Hardback \$95.00 (£73.00)**

**978-1-7936-0634-1 eBook \$45.00 (£35.00)**

**Published by Lexington Books, New York**

**Reviewed by Gina Riley, CUNY Hunter College**

Interest in homeschooling has reached new heights. In fact, in the United States, ten percent of American families are choosing to homeschool this year, up from five percent one year ago (Gallup, 2020). Of course, we will see whether this number changes post-pandemic. However, one thing is clear: more families are pursuing educational options than ever before. Enter the model of hybrid homeschooling, a model where children split their time between homeschool and a more traditional educational environment. This could mean two three days at home and two days at school, or part of the day at home and part of the day in school. *Defining Hybrid Homeschools in America* by Eric Wearne explores this option, supporting the model by vignettes as well as research.

When a family embarks on a traditional homeschooling model journey, key concerns they usually have include time commitment involved, financial impact, and the issue of socialization. Hybrid homeschooling, however, provides the best of both worlds. Parents can have time to work outside the home if they wish, while still being able to homeschool their child. Children and teens can have time away from parents, and engage in socialization with peers for part of the week. There may also be opportunities to gain a diploma through the local district or school, as well as engage in extra-curricular activities.

Wearne provides evidence of numerous models of hybrid homeschooling both nationally and internationally. He mentions, for example, the Regina Caeli Academy, a Catholic based hybrid homeschooling model with campuses both in the USA and UK. He also highlights Grace Preparatory Academy, one of the first home grown models of hybrid homeschooling in the United States. Wearne clearly sees the benefits of the hybrid homeschooling model, and

touts it as a potential model that can reach all learners. However, the model itself is not easy to define, something which Wearne admits and expands upon. For example, what is the difference between a hybrid homeschool and a micro-school? What about public-school districts who choose to allow homeschoolers to take classes at their local school? Are these individuals “hybrid homeschoolers” who are registered as students at the school, or are they students still registered as homeschoolers within the stated district? Who is responsible for the results of the assessment of these students? Who is responsible for funding materials and the cost of educating these students?

Educator benefits of hybrid homeschooling, according to Wearne, include less classroom management challenges and small classroom size. In a hybrid homeschooling model, parental participation is a given—and teachers can progress at a faster rate in terms of instruction because students have time to read and work on projects at home for a longer time compared to traditionally schooled students. Student intrinsic motivation tends to be higher as well. The other side is that private hybrid homeschooling models tend to work on smaller budgets, and so teachers may not receive equal pay compared to their colleagues in that work within more traditional models.

There are benefits to the hybrid homeschooling model for school leaders as well, says Wearne. For example, a hybrid model has the ability to meet student and family needs post-pandemic, as we look towards more creative and innovative future models of education. Hybrid models can also provide feelings of increased happiness and well-being for students because of the increased daily autonomy involved in the choice to attend school part-time versus full-time, as well as less “school burnout” for both teachers and students. Hybrid homeschooling models can also foster deep community and connection between parents, teachers, and school leaders.

There are other recent books about Hybrid Homeschooling, such as *Hybrid Homeschooling: A Guide to the Future of Education* by Michael McShane. However, Wearne’s book provides a more academic, research-based text on the subject. The book itself is also an accessible read, and would be attractive to teachers, administrators, parents, and/or anyone who is curious about hybrid homeschooling. Crucially for differentiating this book as superior in quality is the insertion of the author’s original research contributing to the text.

Within the book, Wearne explores religious and political motivations surrounding hybrid homeschooling—including effects on school choice, charter and private schooling, and taxation. He also asks the big questions with regards to how hybrid homeschooling may affect education as we know it today, including the hybrid homeschool model’s reliance on more equitable grading and/or assessment practice; and how hybrid homeschooling may decentralize the learning processes and the school structure (i.e.: What happens when schools no longer “own” students or student data?). Overall, Eric Wearne’s *Defining Hybrid Homeschools in America* is a must read for school administrators, teachers, and parents interested in hybrid homeschooling models or the future of education as a whole.

## References

- Gallup. (2020). COVID-19 Tracking Poll, July 30-August 12, 2020 [data set]. Gallup Poll Social Series: Work and Education.
- McShane, Michael Q. (2021). *Hybrid Homeschooling: A Guide to the Future of Education*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

## Reviewer Details

Gina Riley, Ph.D. is a Clinical Professor and Program Leader of the Adolescent Special Education Program at CUNY – Hunter College. Dr. Riley has over fifteen years experience working with teens diagnosed with learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders. She is also a seasoned academic, with years of teaching, research, and supervisory experience within the fields of special education, psychology, school psychology, and mental health counseling. In addition, Dr. Riley has extensive experience in online education and distance learning at the college/university level. She is known internationally for her work in the fields of homeschooling, unschooling, and self-directed learning. Her books include *Unschooling: Exploring Learning Beyond The Classroom* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) and *The Homeschooling Starter Guide* (Rockridge Press, 2021). Email: [griley@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:griley@hunter.cuny.edu)



This work by Gina Riley is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)