

Eastern York School District

120 South 3rd Street, PO Box 150
Wrightsville, PA 17368
Phone (717) 252-1555 Fax (717) 478-6000



HOME EDUCATION PROGRAM BASICS

INITIAL DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED:

1. Affidavit listing the student(s) in the Home Education program, signed and properly notarized; and
2. Immunization and medical records for the student(s) in the Home Education program; and
3. An outline of objectives for each student, by subject area, for the upcoming school year.

Once this initial documentation is received, reviewed, and deemed satisfactory, the Supervisor (parent/guardian) of the Home Education Program will receive a letter from EYSD stating that all requirements for the coming school year have been met and that you may begin your home education program. The letter will also outline the items due to the Office of the Assistant Superintendent no later than June 30th of each year. If your child is currently enrolled and attending EYSD, you will need to visit the building of attendance and officially withdraw your child upon receipt of the letter.

ANNUAL DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED:

There are two critical due dates for Home Education documentation. The following are due to the Office of the Assistant Superintendent by the dates indicated for each student in a home education program:

Due by August 1st of each school year:

1. Affidavit, signed and notarized; and
2. A list of objectives for each student, outlined by subject area, for the upcoming school year; and
3. Evidence of a medical exam for students entering grades 6 and 11, as appropriate; and
4. Evidence of a dental exam for students entering grades 3 and 7, as appropriate.

The above items may be mailed or hand-delivered to the Administration Office. Upon satisfactory receipt of the above items, the Supervisor will receive a letter from EYSD stating that all requirements for the coming school year have been met and that you may begin your home education program for the current school year.

Due by June 30th of each school year:

1. A program evaluation report, completed and signed by a qualified evaluator verifying evidence of compliance with the law regarding a Home Education Program; and
2. A copy of the teaching certificate of the evaluator; and
3. Standardized test reports for students who studied at grade level 3, 5, or 8, as appropriate.

The above items may be mailed or hand-delivered to the Administration Office. Upon satisfactory receipt of the above items, the Supervisor will receive a letter from EYSD stating that all requirements for the prior school year have been satisfied.

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HOME EDUCATION IN PENNSYLVANIA FAQ's

Pennsylvania's law on home education is known as Act 169. A copy of this law and home education requirements can be found on the Pennsylvania Department of Education website, www.pde.state.pa.us.

In Pennsylvania, children of **compulsory school age** - children between the ages of eight (8) and seventeen (17) - are required to attend school. Educating a child at home is one way to comply with compulsory school attendance laws. If a child turns 8 before or during the first two weeks of the annual school term (or within the first two weeks of the second semester, if the school district in which the student resides promotes students semi-annually), the affidavit must be filed by the child's birthdate. If the child turns 8 during the school term, the affidavit should be filed prior to the beginning of the next school year. (24 P.S. 13-1304).

If a child has attended any public or private school in first grade or above, or if the parent has submitted an affidavit for a homeschool program for first grade or above, the child must continue their formal education (whether private, public or homeschool), regardless of the child's age, even if they are not yet eight years old (24 P.S. 24 13-1326). Attendance in kindergarten does not count toward this rule, except in certain circumstances. Please see "When should I submit an affidavit and evaluation" for updated information.

With supervisor-issued diplomas now being recognized by the Commonwealth, the age for homeschooling is changed from compulsory school age (up to age 17) to school age (up through age 21). Any student who switches from public school to homeschooling is treated as a transfer and no longer counted in the graduation cohort. It is the same as if the student transferred to another school; they are not counted as a dropout. For homeschooling to be an official change in status, the supervisor must submit the required affidavit and accompanying documentation.

WHEN CAN I HOME EDUCATE MY CHILD?

A child can be home educated if the person teaching the child is a "**properly qualified private tutor**" or if a child's parent or guardian conducts a "**home education program**" for the child. Each of these arrangements has certain requirements.

WHEN IS SOMEONE CONSIDERED A "PROPERLY QUALIFIED PRIVATE TUTOR?"

The main requirements are that the tutor:

1. Must have a Pennsylvania's teacher's certificate; and
2. Must be teaching one or more children who are members of a single family; and
3. Must be providing the child or children with the majority of their instruction; and
4. Must be receiving some form of payment or consideration for their services.

A private tutor must file a copy of his/her Pennsylvania teacher's certificate and all criminal background checks as required by PDE with the superintendent of the student's district of residence. Private tutoring by a properly qualified tutor is subject to the annual approval of the superintendent. The tutoring must provide at least 180 days of instruction per year, or a minimum of 900 hours (990 hours at the secondary level) of instruction per year. If these requirements are met, home instruction should be allowed. Even if a private tutoring situation does not meet these requirements, a parent or guardian may be able to set up a "home

education program” for their child.

Reporting Requirements:

The private tutor is to report to the district the lists of the names and residences of all children between six (6) and eighteen (18) years of age they are tutoring, report when they cease to tutor these students, and notify the district of any such child who has been absent three (3) days, or their equivalent, during the term of compulsory attendance, without lawful excuse. See 24 P.S. § 13-1332.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A “HOME EDUCATION PROGRAM?”

The requirements for a home education program are complex. To summarize: In a home education program, the child is taught by his or her parent, legal guardian, or legal custodian. The person teaching the child (who is called the “**supervisor**” of the child's home education program) must have a high school diploma or GED certificate.

Before beginning the home education program, and by **August 1st** of each year after the program has begun, the **supervisor** of the child’s program must file a sworn statement, known as an **affidavit**, with the superintendent of the child’s school district where the child resides. The affidavit must contain the name of the supervisor, the name and age of each participating child, and the address and phone number for the home. The affidavit must also state that the required subjects will be taught and must contain an outline of proposed educational objectives. **Evidence** that the child has had the legally required immunizations and has received the required health and medical services (such as annual vision and hearing tests) must also be supplied.

The home education program must provide at least 180 days of instruction per year, or **900 hours (990 hours at the secondary level) of instruction per year.**

At the **elementary level**, the child must be instructed in English (including spelling, reading and writing); arithmetic; science; geography; history of the United States and Pennsylvania; civics; safety education (including fire prevention); health; physical education; music; and art.

At the **secondary level**, the child must receive English (including language, literature, speech and composition); science; geography; social studies (including civics, world history, history of the U.S. and Pennsylvania); mathematics (including algebra and geometry); art; music; physical education; health; and safety education.

Upon a supervisor’s request, the school district of residence *must* lend the supervisor copies of the school district’s textbooks and other curriculum materials appropriate for the student’s age and grade level. The following minimum courses in grades nine through twelve are established as a requirement for graduation in a home education program:

- Four years of English
- Three years of mathematics
- Three years of science
- Three years of social studies
- Two years of arts and humanities.

The supervisor of the program must keep a **portfolio** of the child's education, including a log showing the reading materials used, and samples of any writings, worksheets and the like.

At grade levels 3, 5, and 8, students must be given standardized tests in reading/language arts and mathematics by someone other than the parent. PDE has identified a list of acceptable nationally normed standardized tests. The Home Education Program BEC lists the tests that are acceptable. The results of these tests must be kept in the child's portfolio.

At the end of each school year, an **annual written evaluation** of the child's progress, including a review of the material kept in the child's portfolio, by a licensed psychologist or a certified teacher or a qualified private school teacher. This information must be provided to the superintendent by June 30th of each school year. If, after looking over these materials, the superintendent believes that the child is not being properly educated, the superintendent may ask for further documentation. If the supervisor of the home education program does not submit any further documentation, the child can no longer be educated at home. If additional documentation is submitted, but the superintendent still thinks the program is not appropriate, the school board must provide for a hearing by an impartial hearing examiner to decide whether the home education program may continue. The hearing examiner's decision may be appealed to state court.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR EVALUATORS?

The law defines five of ways to qualify as a home education evaluator; these are unchanged and are listed on our Evaluators webpage. School districts should continue to verify that evaluations have been completed by an individual qualified to do so. If an evaluator meets one of the 4 criteria, they have the right to evaluate. There is no need to check qualifications unless the evaluator is new to your district and there is some question regarding their credentials.

1. Licensed clinical psychologist: Use the License number.
2. School psychologist: Use the PPID (or name) and check TIMS.
3. Pennsylvania certified teacher: Use the PPID (or name) and check TIMS; list subjects/grades taught; years taught.
4. Nonpublic teacher or administrator (non-certified): List place of employment, subjects/grades taught, years taught, contact information for the school (phone number)
5. Persons with other qualifications: Whatever the superintendent will accept (e.g. college professors, teachers certified in other states, experienced homeschool parents, professional curriculum providers).

This information can be added to the evaluation beneath the evaluator's signature as a matter of a few lines.

WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT AN AFFIDAVIT AND EVALUATION?

An affidavit does not have to be submitted at least until a child turns 8 years old. Once a child attains the age of 8, it is the school district's policy that determines whether the affidavit must be submitted immediately or whether it can wait until the following school year. Thus a parent should determine the district's policy. Philadelphia City School District has an additional requirement.

An affidavit must be submitted in the following circumstances:

- Kindergarten in public school. If a child was enrolled in a public school for kindergarten or above and transferred to a home education program, an affidavit and an evaluation is due every year regardless of the age or grade of the child. (PA Supreme Court appeal decision, June 16, 2014 in the Commonwealth of PA v. Jennifer Ann Kerstetter)
- Enrolled in any educational option for first grade or above. If a child attended first grade or above in any public or nonpublic school, or the child was enrolled in a private tutoring program for first grade or above, or an affidavit to homeschool was submitted for first grade or above, an affidavit and an evaluation is due every year regardless of the child's age (24 P.S. § 13-1326).
- Eight (8) years old. If a child has never been enrolled in any legal educational option (see the Educational Options section), an affidavit must be submitted by the student's eighth birthday. However, school districts have the option of allowing the affidavit to be submitted at the beginning of the next school year, if the child's birthday is after the first two weeks of school (24 P.S. 13-1304).
- As a general rule, any student who has not attained 17 years of age, and has not graduated, must submit an affidavit. See the Exceptions to Compulsory Attendance section of this guide.

Philadelphia City School District Requirement.

Compulsory school age in the Philadelphia City School District is an exception. In Philadelphia, compulsory school age is 6 years old. However, if you are homeschooling you must submit a letter of intent to homeschool as soon as your child turns 6. You still are not required to submit an affidavit until your child attains the age of 8.

General Rules for Commencing of Compulsory Age.

- If a child has been enrolled in any public school from kindergarten or above, they have become of compulsory school age.
- If a child has been enrolled in any educational option from first grade or above (public/private/homeschool/private tutoring), they have become of compulsory school age regardless of their chronological age.
- If a child has never been enrolled in any educational option, they must enroll by age 8.

The disadvantages of not submitting an affidavit until age 8:

- Submitting an affidavit entitles you to borrow the textbooks and other curricular materials from the school district for free
- The affidavit entitles your children to participate in extracurricular activities
- Once you submit an affidavit, you can begin counting the Mandatory Courses (see the Curriculum webpage) as completed (without an affidavit, there is no legally-recognized home education program so any studies prior to the affidavit do not count toward completion of the mandatory courses). However, the list of mandatory courses is so short that it easily can be completed between the ages of 8 and 6th grade.

The advantages of not submitting an affidavit until age 8:

- No cost of a notarized affidavit
- No cost of an evaluation
- No need to worry about completing the mandatory 180 days or 900 hours of instruction

Law regarding when to submit an evaluation by an evaluator:

- An evaluation for the kindergarten child is optional.
- The first grade student must have an evaluation submitted because an affidavit was submitted.
- The third grade student must have an evaluation submitted because an affidavit was submitted and likely the child is age 8.

ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS TO SCHOOL A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY?

If a child has a disability and a school district has identified the child as in need of special education, the proposed home education program must be approved by a certified special education teacher or a licensed clinical or certified school psychologist. This requirement *does not* apply to students who have been identified as gifted or talented.

CAN CHILDREN WHO ARE HOMESCHOOLED PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES OFFERED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT WHERE THEY LIVE?

In Eastern York School District, students enrolled in a home education program may participate in the district's c-curricular activities and interscholastic athletic programs if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The student is a resident of the district
2. The student fulfills all eligibility criteria, or their equivalent, required for participation in an activity or program by district students, in accordance with Board Policy 122 Co-curricular Activities and/or Policy 123 Interscholastic Athletics.

Please see Board Policy 137.1, located on the Eastern York School District website, for guidelines regarding participation.

CAN A CHILD WHO IS HOME EDUCATED RECEIVE A DIPLOMA?

The school district of residence does not issue a diploma to a child who successfully completes a home education program. However, there are several ways for a child who is home educated to receive a diploma:

1. A student can fulfill the necessary requirements of a home education organization to receive a home education diploma. Home education organizations can be approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to issue home education diplomas. Pennsylvania Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency (PHAA) is one such organization that issues home education diplomas. (More information about PHAA can be found at www.pahomeschoolers.com).
2. A student can successfully complete the GED test and receive a Commonwealth Secondary Diploma; or
3. A student can successfully complete 1 year or 30 semester hours at an accredited postsecondary institution and submit that information to the PA Department of Education and receive a Commonwealth Secondary Diploma.

Occasionally the Department is asked to verify the home education program diplomas of individual students. While PDE does not provide or track individual diplomas of students participating in home education programs, home education programs have multiple paths to a state-recognized diploma.

Parent-issued diploma: Act 196 of 2014 modified the law to allow parents to award a state-recognized home education diploma to their children. The Act became effective for diplomas granted beginning October 31, 2014. The requirements for this diploma follow.

Requirements:

(1) The supervisor must submit an affidavit to the superintendent of schools in their district of residence for the student's twelfth grade (graduation) year

(2) The student must complete the graduation requirements of the law while enrolled in the home education program (see the Curriculum section)

(3) The home education evaluator fulfills the legal requirements as a secondary level home education evaluator (see the Evaluators section)

(4) The evaluator's twelfth grade evaluation for the student is submitted to the school district and this evaluator co-signs the diploma confirming the student has completed the graduation requirements of the law

(5) The diploma is awarded to the student on a standardized form developed by PDE

The form for a parent-issued diploma may be downloaded and printed from this link: Home Education Diploma (PDE 6008) and Definitions.

For students completing graduation requirements prior to October 31, 2014:

The district should continue to maintain past home education records to verify the education of homeschooled students prior to the 2014-15 school year. Thus, if the student graduated before October 31, 2014, there are two options in addition to the Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma: (1) a diploma from one of our authorized home education diploma-granting organizations (see our Diplomas webpage for a listing), or (2) a letter or PHEA form signed by the superintendent of schools (a requirement of school districts if the student did not belong to a diploma-granting organization, 22 Pa Code § 121.21 (c)).

For students completing graduation requirements after October 31, 2014:

In addition to the ways of proving completion of homeschool graduation requirements prior to October 31, 2014, Act 196 provides for state-recognized parent-issued home education diplomas. The diploma must be on a standardized form developed by PDE and co-signed by the twelfth grade Home Education Evaluator. This standard form will be posted on PDE's Diploma webpage.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DECIDE TO RE-ENROLL MY CHILD IN PUBLIC SCHOOL AFTER I HAVE HOME EDUCATED HIM/HER?

Sometimes parents will home educate their child for a few years, and then decide to re-enroll their child back in public school. Parents can choose to re-enroll their child at any time (provided that the child hasn't graduated from high school or turned 21).

A question often arises about in which grade the child should be placed. There is no hard and fast rule that requires public schools to place the child in the grade the parent requests. However, schools cannot make arbitrary placement decisions. To help determine an appropriate placement, parents can provide the school with copies of coursework the child has completed during the time he/she was home educated. The school can also evaluate the child using objective testing measures to determine the appropriate grade and/or courses for the child.

IS HOME EDUCATION THE SAME AS HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION OR INSTRUCTION IN THE HOME?

Home Education is NOT the same as homebound instruction or instruction in the home.

Home Education (or homeschooling) is a home education program developed and provided by a child's parent and/or guardian. A child who is home educated is NOT enrolled in the school district of residence. On the other hand, **homebound instruction** is instruction provided by a school district to an enrolled student who cannot attend school for a short period of time due to a medical problem (such as a broken leg). **Instruction in the home** is provided by a school district to a student with a disability who is in need of special education services and who is enrolled in the district, but for some reason those education services cannot be provided appropriately to the student in a school setting. The use of **instruction in the home** is restricted to students whose needs require full-time special education services and programs outside the school setting for the entire school day.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOME EDUCATION?

There are many web sites that provide information about home education in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Department of Education's web site includes much information about home education and private tutoring in Pennsylvania, including frequently asked questions about home education and copies of the laws about home education and private tutoring. The web site also includes a comprehensive list of home education organizations serving Pennsylvania families. The address for this web site is **www.pde.state.pa.us/home_education/site/default.asp**. You can also contact the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Home Education Office at (717) 787- 4860.

There are two other excellent web sites developed by parents' organizations that provide information about the laws on homeschooling in Pennsylvania and materials, such as curricula, to assist families in home education. These sites are **www.pahomeschoolers.com**, operated by the Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, and **www.phen.org**, operated by the Pennsylvania Home Education Network. Pennsylvania Homeschoolers can also be contacted at: RR2 Box 117, Kittanning, PA 16201 (724-783-6512).