

Questions you may have on Illinois Home Schooling

1. What authorization is required to make a home school legal in Illinois?

The Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/26-1 et seq.) states that children between the ages of 7 and 17 must attend public school; however, an exception is made for “....any child attending a private or parochial school where children are taught the branches of education taught to children of corresponding age and grade in the public schools, and where the instruction of the child in the branches of education is in the English language.” Based on this law, the Illinois Supreme Court held in 1950 that the phrase “private school” included home-schooling if the teacher (either the parent her or himself or a private tutor) were competent, the required subjects were taught, and the student received an education at least equivalent to public schooling. (*People v. Levisen*, 404 Ill.574 (1950)).

2. What subjects must be covered in my home school?

Language arts; Mathematics;
Biological and physical sciences; Social sciences;
Fine arts; and
Physical development and health.

3. How much time must the student spend on home-schooling?

Illinois law does not set any minimum number of hours per day, or days of instruction per year, for students in private schools. However, the Illinois courts have ruled that home- schooling must provide an education that is equivalent with the standards set for public schools. (e.g. *Scoma v. Chicago Board of Education*, 391 F.Supp. 452 (N.D. Ill. 1974)).

4. Am I required to register my home school?

No. In Illinois, registration of home-schooled students is not required. Parents may choose to notify their regional superintendent of education and/or the State Board of their intention to home-school. Here is a link to the one-page form:

<http://www.isbe.net/homeschool/default.htm>

A directory of Regional Offices of Education may be found at:

<http://www.isbe.net/regionaloffices/Default.htm>

5. Are there any testing requirements for students enrolled in an Illinois home school?

There is no requirement that students in a home school be tested. If parents choose to administer tests to their children to assess their progress, they are not required to submit the results to any school official.

6. May a home-schooled student take assessment tests through his/her district of residence?

The public school may choose to allow a home-schooled student to participate in some assessment tests. However, state assessments such as the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) are not considered appropriate tests for students in nonpublic schools, since the content of such assessments was designed specifically for the Illinois public school curriculum.

7. My child is currently attending a public school. Is there a formal procedure I must follow to withdraw him from school to begin home-schooling?

It is highly recommended that you give the public school a dated letter (keeping copies for your records) that states you will be withdrawing your student to place him/her in a private school. Such a letter indicates your intent to continue your student's education and will make it less likely that the school reports your student to county officials as truant after a prolonged absence. Home-schooling organizations provide samples of this type of letter.

8. Does the State Board of Education give advice to parents on effective home- schooling?

No. The State Board of Education's jurisdiction generally does not extend to private or parochial schools and for most purposes a home school is regarded as a private school. We give basic (legal) information to parents and others interested in home-schooling, including references to private education in Illinois law or in court cases. In addition, we have provided links to some state and national websites of possible interest (see below).

9. Where can I find information on how to begin a home-schooling program?

Here are some of the resources available to parents and others interested in home- schooling:

- Your public library should have information on home-school groups in your area as well as state-wide or national home schooling associations. Some or all of these contacts may share information on home-schooling textbooks, study guides, homework materials, and curricula. Your library would also have information on home-schooling magazines and books.
- The Internet has thousands of links to home-schooling information ranging from suppliers of home-schooling materials to home-schooling "ezines" and support groups to research studies and legal analyses. Parents interested in purchasing a home-schooling curriculum or related materials through the Internet are advised to first research the products, and their claims, as they would do before making other types of on-line purchases.
- Your Regional Office of Education may have information on local home- schooling organizations as well as links to state and/or national organizations.

For a directory of Regional Offices see:

<http://www.isbe.net/regionaloffices/Default.htm>

- You may have friends, neighbors and/or relatives who are home-schooling their children and would be willing to share their experiences with you.

10. Are any home school programs accredited by the State Board of Education?

The State Board does not accredit any nonpublic schools. There is a voluntary process for non-public schools located in Illinois that wish to pursue registration and/or recognition through this agency; however, the law excludes home-based schools from this process (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25o (e)).

11. Is there financial assistance available to help with the costs of home-schooling?

The State Board of Education is not aware of any financial resources designed to help parents meet home-schooling expenses. However, in the event that a student is being home-schooled at a location other than that student's residence, transportation reimbursement may be available to parents/guardians of eligible students by submitting to the State Board the non-public home school claim log sheet (ISBE 54-13) available at:

http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/54-13_parent_guardian_reimburse.pdf

12. May a student attend public school part-time while being home-schooled?

Yes, students may attend their local public school part-time under the following conditions set forth in the School Code (Section 10-20.24):

- there is sufficient space available in the school;
- you have submitted your request (on behalf of the student) to the school principal by May 1 for the following school year; and
- the course or courses you have requested are part of the school's regular curriculum.

13. May a home-schooled student take driver's education through his local public school?

Yes. Illinois school law requires that school districts maintaining grades 9 through 12 shall provide the classroom course in driver's education, and an approved course in practice driving, to eligible students who are attending a non-public school in the district. Home-schooled students may take driver's education under the following conditions set forth in the School Code (Sections 27-23, 27-24.2 and 27-24.4):

- The chief administrator of the home school must notify the local public district by April 1 of the name of the home-schooled student who wishes to take the driver's education course during the next school year.
- The chief administrator of the home school must provide evidence to the public school that the student has received a passing grade in at least eight courses during the previous two semesters at the time the parent or guardian completes an official application for enrollment of the student in driver's education.

14. May a home-schooled student participate in interscholastic athletics through his/her district of residence?

Public schools have no obligation to make extracurricular activities, including athletics, open to students attending private schools. In addition, many Illinois public elementary and high schools belong to intramural sports organizations, i.e., the Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA) or the Illinois High School Association (IHSA). Both organizations have specific bylaws that limit the conditions under which home-schooled students may participate in interscholastic athletics.

<http://www.iesa.org/> (Illinois Elementary School Association)

<http://www.ihsa.org/> (Illinois High School Association)

15. My home-schooled student is completing the equivalent of 8th grade. Is he entitled to receive an 8th grade diploma from his local public school and/or take part in the graduation program?

No. Since your student is attending private school full-time he has no legal right to participate in public school graduation ceremonies.

16. My student receives special education services at his public school. Will there be any change in services if he withdraws to enter home-schooling? What changes might be expected?

This is a complex issue and will differ markedly from student to student. Therefore, statements on this website should be taken as guidelines only.

In general, a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will not have the right to the same range of services available through his public school if he chooses to withdraw to attend a private school.

A portion of the funding public schools receive for special education services must be earmarked for non-public schools, and public schools must provide timely and meaningful consultation (TMC) to private schools concerning this funding allocation. The public schools are not required to distribute these funds so that each eligible student receives an equal share. Depending on several factors (including the student's IEP; the categories of disabilities that can be covered by the public school's funding allocation; and the location of services to be offered), a student with an IEP who chooses to withdraw from public school may not receive services as comprehensive as those available to him while attending a public school full-time.

Parents of students with IEPs should also bear in mind that, due to a change in legislation enacted in 2005, it is now the student's district of attendance (not his district of residence) that holds financial responsibility for that student.

Special Education Non-Public Proportionate Share Calculation and Home-Schooled

Students: <http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/default.htm>

17. May a student in a private school who receives some special education services also attend a public school on a part-time basis? If so, what services will the student receive?

The School Code does permit private school students who are eligible to receive special education services to attend a public school on a part-time basis (see Section 14-6.01 of the School Code). Students who are eligible to receive special education may attend public schools in their districts of residence and receive services through an IEP offered by the district. In order to qualify for an IEP, students must attend the public schools for a minimum of one instructional subject.

Students who meet this requirement are eligible to receive IEP services to the extent they are actually in attendance in the public school setting. However, parents should realize that the extent of services their children may receive may not be the same amount of service they would receive as full-time public school students.

For more information on part-time attendance in the public schools, please review the document at the following website: http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/guidance_5-7.pdf

18. I am ready to enroll (or re-enroll) my student in public school after a period of home- schooling or other private schooling. How will his work be evaluated by the public school?

Your public school will determine grade placement for the student based on an evaluation of his work and pursuant to its policies. Given the wide variety of home-schooling curricula available in Illinois, public schools may prefer to focus on appropriate grade placement for the student rather than assigning individual course credits. However, the district may not make a placement decision that is unreasonable or arbitrary. (For example, a public school cannot require a home school program to be “registered” or “recognized” through the State Board of Education since the School Code excludes home schools from this voluntary process.) A method of grade placement (such as the use of competency testing) that treats all students entering from nonpublic schools in Illinois, or from public and nonpublic schools in other states, in the same way would be a reasonable policy for a district to adopt.

19. Can a home-schooled student return for the 12th grade and graduate?

Yes, if the public school determines that the combination of credits awarded for work done at the home school and credits earned in an accredited private or public school meet state graduation requirements and if the student passes any other reasonable requirements after re-enrolling in the public school.

20. How do colleges evaluate the work of a student whose high school diploma was received through a private home school?

Many colleges and universities have procedures for admitting home-schooled students and for assessing their background. For example, here is information from the University of Illinois: http://www.oar.uiuc.edu/future/faq/home_school.html

Homeschoolers and Sports Participation

Interscholastic high school sports are governed by the Illinois High School Association (IHSA), which is an organization independent of the public schools with its own rules. Any school, public or private may belong to the IHSA and form its own teams to participate in the extracurricular programs. A home school is different from other private schools due to the fact that it usually does not have enough students to form a team of its own. Therefore, homeschoolers are often in the position of wishing to join a team representing another school, usually the neighborhood public school. Your local public school may be amenable to homeschooler participation, but they are held by IHSA rules that specify that all members of the teams that represent the school, actually attend the school. If a public high school wishes to offer extracurricular activities to homeschoolers who are residents of the district, the homeschooler must enroll in the school and be taking a minimum of 20 credit hours of work per week at the member school or in a program approved by the member school. The student must be granted credit for the work taken either at the member school or in a program the member school approved.