

# Home School Questions and Answers

## Getting Started

### 1. I am thinking of home-schooling my child. Where do I start?

First, research to gain an understanding of home-schooling and what is involved. Home-schooling in Minnesota is covered under the compulsory instruction statute, [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22](#), and [related statutes](#). Explore the different philosophies, curricula, techniques and organizations that are resources for home schools. You can check the websites of local and state home-schooling organizations for available support and resources.

### 2. Are Minnesota students required to be in school?

Minnesota's compulsory instruction law requires all children ages 7-17 to attend a public or nonpublic (private) school. Home-schools are considered a type of nonpublic school under Minnesota law. Because compulsory instruction and school attendance is mandatory, you must register the home school. A student between ages 7-17 must be enrolled in school and cannot miss school unless:

- a home school is compliant with Minnesota Statutes, sections 120A.22 and 120A. 24; or,
- the parent has qualified for legitimate legal exemption to compulsory instruction in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 12.

### 3. Are Amish communities completely exempt from the Compulsory Instruction statutes?

No, students from Amish communities are not entirely exempt from Minnesota's compulsory instruction requirements; however, they do have a right to discontinue education, reporting and testing following eighth grade.

### 4. What is the difference between homebound and home-schooling?

Homebound instruction is for full-time public school students who have illnesses that confine them to home. If requested by a physician and approved by the district, a tutor comes to the home on a regular basis to keep the student caught up on regular public school coursework until the student is well enough to return to school. Home-schooling is private school at home.

## 5. What is the difference between public online learning and home-schooling in Minnesota?

Online learning most often refers to a form of public education that takes place at home, usually with parent/guardian involvement. This option provides free public school curriculum, public school mandated tests, direct instruction and supervision by licensed Minnesota public school teachers. Completion of public online learning programs result in public school diplomas. For more information, please visit the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) [Online Learning Providers webpage](#) or contact Jeff Plaman at [mde.onlinelearning@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.onlinelearning@state.mn.us) or 651-582-8457.

Online learning through a state-approved online school is a public school option, not a home-school nonpublic education option. The student or family may select a state approve online provider of their choice and enroll directly with them. Once enrolled in the online program through either of these processes the student is considered a public school student, not a home-school student.

Minnesota law does not allow home-school students to access supplemental online learning through the state's shared-time law. However, home-school students may be able to access part-time online learning options by paying tuition to state-approved online learning providers.

Private online learning programs also exist where parents pay tuition; generally, the parents are using the program as the home-schooling curriculum. However, some private online learning options are schools that register with the local school district and perform all of the other functions that a traditional bricks and mortar nonpublic school does.

## 6. I have made the decision to home-school. Now what?

You must inform the superintendent of your local school district of your intent to home-school your student(s). You may use the form titled [Initial Registration Form for Unaccredited Nonpublic Schools including Home-Schools](#) developed by MDE, or you may report the same information in another manner.

After the first year of home-schooling, you must update the superintendent about the status of your home school through a [Letter of Intent to Continue to Provide Instruction](#).

## Compliance with Home-School Law

### 1. When do I register my home school with my local district?

Parents who home-school must notify the student's resident school district superintendent:

- By October 1 of the first year the child is home-schooled after reaching age 7;
- Within 15 days of withdrawing a child from public school to home school or to enroll the child in any nonpublic school that is not accredited by a state-recognized accrediting agency ([List of State-Recognized Accrediting Agencies](#));
- Within 15 days of moving out of a resident district; and,
- By October 1, after a new resident district is established.

## 2. How do I register my home school with my local district?

The Minnesota Department of Education provides a document, [Initial Registration Form for Unaccredited Nonpublic Schools including Home-Schools](#), which parents may use to register their home school with their local district. Parents may also register using an electronic or web-based format used by the district, or report the information in another manner. [Home education associations](#) also offer forms for families to use. The information provided to the superintendent must include:

- the child's name, birth date, and address
- the name of each instructor and evidence that each instructor meets the requirements of [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 10](#)
- the annual examinations the home school intends to use, the administration and location of the examination, if required, in accordance with [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 11](#); and,
- statements as required by [Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.15, subdivision 8](#), regarding required childhood immunizations.

## 3. My student is enrolled in a full-fledged private online learning school that keeps the transcript, grade assignments, and issues diplomas. Do I need to register as a homeschooler?

Full-fledged private online learning schools (as opposed to private online curriculum only or state-approved public online learning program), have the responsibility to report your student's enrollment to the local school superintendent by October 1 each year. Likewise, they, not you, have the requirement to come to an agreement with the superintendent on a nationally normed achievement test each year if the school is not accredited by a Minnesota state-recognized accrediting agency.

## 4. Where can I find more information about Minnesota Immunization law, including forms?

Information about immunization law, Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.15, subdivision 8, is available from the [Minnesota Department of Health](#). Forms are available from the [Minnesota Department of Health](#).

## 5. May step-parents or grandparents home-school their family members?

A person who is providing instruction to a child must meet at least one of the following requirements per [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 10](#):

- The instructor holds a valid Minnesota teaching license in the field and for the grade level taught. (Attach a copy of the license.)
- The instructor is directly supervised by a person holding a valid Minnesota license.
- The instructor has successfully completed a teacher competency examination. Please contact [Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board](#) (PELSB) for more information.
- The instructor holds a baccalaureate degree.
- The instructor is the parent, guardian or other person having legal custody of a child who is assessed according to the procedures in [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 11](#).

Generally, this means they need to hold a four-year bachelor's degree. In situations where this is not the case, one might consider enrollment in a State-approved online learning program. These programs are public schools

that allow the student to learn at home with instruction provided by teachers holding Minnesota licenses while the step-parent or grandparent serves as learning coach.

## **6. What subjects are required to be taught in a home-school?**

For students aged 7-17, instruction, textbooks and materials must be in the English language. Another language may be used pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, sections [124D.59](#) to [124D.61](#). Instruction must be provided in at least the following subject areas:

- basic communication skills including reading and writing, literature and fine arts;
- mathematics and science;
- social studies including history, geography, economics, government and citizenship; and
- health and physical education.

## **7. What do I need to know about selecting and obtaining curriculum?**

MDE does not help select curriculum for nonpublic schools, including home-schools. Your student must receive instruction in the knowledge and skill areas detailed in the [compulsory instruction law](#).

## **8. What are the requirements for assessments?**

A parent who does not meet the requirements of [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 10, clauses \(1-3\)](#) needs to administer a standardized, norm-referenced test annually to each student between the ages of 7-17. The tests, and the protocols for administering it, must be mutually agreed upon between you and your school district's superintendent. In addition, if the standardized, norm-referenced assessment does not provide assessment in each required subject area in [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 9](#), the parent must assess the child's performance in the applicable subject area.

## **9. Where can I find a nationally norm-referenced standardized test?**

Nationally normed tests can be obtained in several ways. Examples of nationally norm-referenced standardized tests include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) for grades K-8, the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) for grades 9-12, the Stanford Achievement Tests (SAT-10) for grades K-12, the California Achievement Test (Terra Nova) and the Peabody. Home-school parents can order tests from the [University of Minnesota Statewide Testing Program](#). Tests are also available through some home-school organizations locally and nationally.

## **10. What must I do with assessment results?**

All assessment results and scores must be kept with home-school documentation.

## **11. My student scored very low on the annual standardized test. What do I need to do?**

You must obtain additional evaluation of the child's abilities to check for possible learning disabilities. If your child scored at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile or lower, or one grade level below the performance level of children the same age, state law requires further testing under [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 11\(c\)](#). There are

many organizations that will complete this type of evaluation. Consider checking with your physician or with the resident school district's special education office to make arrangements.

## **12. Are there exceptions to the annual nationally norm-referenced testing requirement?**

An accredited home-school is exempt from the testing requirement, per [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 11\(d\)](#). In certain situations, when the person providing instruction meets certain requirements, the testing required in [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 11\(b\)](#) is also waived.

## **13. Can my home-school be accredited?**

Minnesota currently recognizes one accrediting organization for accrediting home-schools – the [Minnesota Home-Based Educators' Accrediting Association](#) (HBEAA). It is the only organization to have successfully met and maintained the necessary accrediting association standards.

## **14. Do testing exemptions exist for students with disabilities?**

No. Please work with your resident school district's special education director to determine a meaningful assessment for a child with disabilities, as needed.

## **15. What sort of documentation do I need to maintain?**

The home-school must maintain documentation that all required subjects are being taught, proof that required assessments have been administered at least annually, and the results of those assessments. Documentation must include class schedules, copies of materials used for instruction, and descriptions of methods used to assess student achievement, including scores on any norm-referenced tests administered under [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 11](#). This documentation must be provided to any public school where the child may wish to enroll after having been enrolled in a home school, so that the school or district can determine where the child should be placed and what course requirements might apply to a public school diploma. This documentation also must be available to the county attorney in cases involving enforcement of compulsory instruction and reporting, truancy or juvenile safety and placement.

Public school districts and other organizations (colleges, military or prospective employers) may require additional documentation to transfer credits or hire a home-school student. They might request:

- Transcripts
- A record of the student's record of achievement
- A portfolio of work the student completed
- A list of the curriculum or textbooks
- Administration of tests and results of assessments
- An interview with the student(s)
- A conference with the home-school instructor and/or parent/guardian.

## **16. Can my home-school student graduate early?**

Home-school students, and students at all nonpublic institutions, must meet the graduation requirements set by the home-school or private institution. In a home-school setting, parents set the graduation requirements for high school, and the student graduates when the requirements have been met per [Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.07](#). Minnesota's compulsory instruction statute, which requires students be in school until age 17, only applies to students who have not yet graduated.

## **17. How are concerns about educational neglect, home-school testing violations, or other non-compliance with compulsory instruction and reporting handled?**

County human services receive and handle complaints of all forms of child neglect, including educational neglect.

Superintendents have the legal obligation to monitor suspected violations of compulsory instruction, testing and reporting, and seek to bring situations into compliance with state law. If they are unable to resolve the issue directly with the family within 15 days, the superintendent must request fact-finding and mediation services from the commissioner of education per [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.26](#). If the alleged violations are not corrected through fact-finding and mediation, the superintendent must notify the county attorney of the alleged violations. The superintendent must also notify the parents of the intent to notify the county attorney. The county attorney may prosecute for violations, and a criminal complaint may be filed.

## **Questions about Additional Resources**

### **1. Can state aid provided to my child's public school transfer directly to my home school?**

Home schools are not eligible for per-pupil general education funding from the state.

### **2. What are the costs associated with home-schooling?**

Some examples of typical costs associated with home-schooling include: textbooks, curriculum, supplies, arts experiences, and tuition for programs that are outside the parent's ability to teach. The parent may pay for additional instruction in the arts, for the child to participate in community-based sports teams, or have experiential learning and field trips. The annual required standardized tests also cost money.

It takes a commitment and investment of time to teach, keep records, and generally oversee your child's education.

### **3. Is there financial support for home-school curricula, materials, textbooks and assessments?**

Parents of students in many nonpublic schools often pay for most of their student's cost of education in the form of tuition as an out-of-pocket expense. Similarly, home-schooling families generally cover most or all of the expenses for curriculum, books, instructional materials and experiences. A small amount of financial assistance

is available through the Aids to Nonpublic Students program. You must meet the following deadlines if you want to be eligible to receive aid:

By September 15: Request the Aids to Nonpublic Students Form from your resident school district.

By October 1: Return the Aids to Nonpublic Students Form to your resident school district.

By October 15: Your resident school district submits the form to MDE, allowing you to access funding for textbooks, nationally normed achievement tests, and individual instructional materials on a loan basis.

Pupil Health Secondary Pupil Guidance and Counseling Services. To learn the current rates, see the [nonpublic pupil aids promulgation memo](#) on rates on the MDE website.

Students must be age 5 by September 1 to be eligible for any aid. Kindergarteners in half-day programs receive pro-rated half-time funding.

For questions about Aids to Nonpublic Students, contact MDE School Finance: [Greg Sogaard](#), 651-582-8858.

#### **4. Are there any tax breaks for expenses related to home-schooling?**

Minnesota offers a dollar-for-dollar income tax credit for qualified low-income families, as well as an education cost subtraction (tax deduction) for many other families for up to \$2650 in expenses. See the Minnesota Department of Revenue's Individual Income Tax Fact Sheets on the [K-12 Education Subtraction and Credit](#) and Qualifying Home-School Expenses to learn about Minnesota's K-12 education tax credit and subtraction to determine whether some taxes or taxable income can be reduced.

Additionally, Minnesota home-schools may be exempt from state sales tax on some items. Complete the Minnesota Department of Revenue's [Certificate of Exemption](#). For more information on what items may be eligible for state sales tax exemption, contact the [Minnesota Department of Revenue](#).

#### **5. Can my home-school student access services at a public school?**

Under [Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.44](#), home-school students may be provided health, guidance and counseling services at a public school site, a neutral site, or the home-school. The resident district and representatives of the home-school must hold an annual consultation regarding the type, provider and location of services. The resident district governing board must make the final decision on the location of the provision of services, and the MDE commissioner shall allot to school districts the actual cost of the services, which shall not exceed the average expenditure per public school pupil.

#### **6. Can my child participate in the extracurricular activities, including junior varsity and varsity athletics, of our resident school district?**

Home-schools and other nonpublic schools with five or fewer students may participate in their resident school district's extracurricular activities, as outlined in [Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.49](#). Participation in competitive sports at high school is regulated through the [Minnesota High School League](#), (763)560-2262. Public

school boards may require fees for students to participate in extracurricular activities under [Minnesota State Statutes 123B.36](#).

## **7. May home-school students have access to School Nutrition Program benefits?**

Generally no. Home-school students would typically not have access to school nutrition program benefits. Home-school children could have access if they are enrolled in the district and taking classes (at least part time) at a school where school meal programs are offered. For additional information, please contact MDE's [Food and Nutrition Services](#).

## **8. Can home-schools teach the classroom portion of driver's education?**

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety has options for classroom driver's education that are only available to full-time home-school students in situations that will lead to a home-school high school diploma, per [Minnesota Statutes, section 171.05, subdivision 2\(1\)\(ii\)](#).

## **9. Can my child with special needs receive special education services through my resident school district?**

Resident school districts must allow home-school students to receive special education services through the school district, per [Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.18](#) and [section 126C.19](#).

## **10. Can shared-time provisions in state law help my student access academic courses?**

Nonpublic school students, including home-school students, without an IEP can request shared-time instruction from any public school in Minnesota, but local policy will determine whether the shared-time option is available to the student and, if so, what the limitations are.

If the student is not a resident of the district where the intended school is located and that school is willing to enroll the student as a shared-time student, then the school needs to contact the resident district to request the shared-time funding. The resident district must comply. The student must be a Minnesota resident to be eligible to generate shared-time aid.

One important limitation exists at the state level. Minnesota law does not allow nonpublic students, including home-school students, to generate shared-time aid for participation in Minnesota K-12 public online learning courses, which means the public school online program can charge the family tuition.

## **11. Can my public school student use the shared-time law to occasionally home school a class?**

The shared-time state statute is not designed as a means for public school students to occasionally take a home-school class or other private learning options. Instead, these public school students may explore independent study under supervision of a licensed teacher or supplemental public online learning. The starting point for discussing these options for public school students are district guidance counselors.

## **12. Can my home-school student attend a school for religious instruction?**

Unrelated to shared time, any public school student has the right to be absent from public school up to three hours per week if it is the wish of the parent for the child to attend a school for religious instruction conducted and maintained by some church, or association of churches, or any Sunday school association incorporated under the laws of Minnesota, per [Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 12\(a\)\(3\)](#).

## **13. Can my home-school student take college classes?**

Your student can take postsecondary classes through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program if they meet the requirements and are admitted to a [participating Minnesota institution](#).

Under [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.09, subdivision 4](#), 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade home-school students may apply to take college classes (online or in-person) through PSEO by contacting a [participating institution](#) listed on the MDE webpage. 10<sup>th</sup> graders are restricted to enrolling in one career or technical education (CTE) course during their first semester of PSEO. A 10<sup>th</sup> grader must receive a passing score on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment, or another reading assessment accepted by the enrolling institution. If your 10<sup>th</sup> grade student receives a grade of “C” or better in the CTE course, they can enroll in additional CTE courses the following semester.

## **14. May 14- and 15- year-old students work during school hours on school days?**

This area is overseen by the [Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry](#). Please contact them at 651-284-5070, 1-800-342-5354 or [dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us](mailto:dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us) for further guidance.

## **15. My student is in high school. Who prepares the transcript and diploma?**

As the administrator of a home school, you are responsible for keeping the proper records to produce a transcript and a diploma. Many online and print resources can assist the home-school parent to produce an accurate and professional transcript. MDE does not certify or validate any private school diploma or transcript. Likewise, local public school districts do not do this for home-schools or other nonpublic schools.

## **16. Can my student who is graduating from home school walk with the public school class at graduation?**

No, students graduating from home-schools do not participate in the graduation services of the public school. Although graduation ceremonies are sometimes classified as extracurricular activities, home-school students cannot participate in the graduation ceremonies for students in the public high school because these are ceremonies for students who have successfully met the graduation requirements and are graduating from that particular school.

## 17. Can MDE verify or certify a home-school diploma or transcript for employers, military or college admission's offices?

MDE is not able to provide any verification or certification of any home-school diploma or transcript. Organizations need to work directly with the parent who instructed the student.

## 18. How can home-school students take college entrance tests?

Home-educated students wanting to take either the ACT or SAT college test will usually find many options through local high schools and colleges. However, the corresponding practice tests may be harder to access. Home-schooling advocates recommend using home-school codes when you test so that the scores are sent to you at your home address, and *not* to the high school where you tested.

- **PreACT:** if you want to take the practice ACT, check with your local public high school. Some home-school organizations also offer it. PreACT code for homeschools is: **979-999**.
- **Taking the ACT:** The ACT is offered four to six times throughout the year. Homeschool students can register on the ACT testing site and follow the directions for downloading the necessary documents for testing day. The homeschool high school code for the ACT is **969-999**.
- **Taking the PSAT/NMSQT:** The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) is given each year in October. It measures the same knowledge and skills as the SAT and is the qualifying test for entry to the National Merit® Scholarship Program. To take the PSAT/NMSQT, you'll need to contact a high school near you that's administering the test. We recommend contacting them several months before the test date. Since the test is given in October this means contact the high school where you want to take the test in late May or early June. Many high schools will not allow this because of limitations on the number of tests they are allowed to order. For annual PSAT dates, please visit the [SAT Suite of Assessments](#). If a student who wants to take the PSAT to compete for the National Merit Scholarship missed the test, contact the [National Merit Scholarship Corporation](#) for next steps. Code for the PSAT for Minnesota residents is **992449**.
- **Taking the SAT:** Homeschooled students can register for the SAT online or on paper, just like any other student. Anywhere you're asked for your high school code on the registration form, use code **970000**.
- **Free Practice for the SAT and PSAT/NMSQT:** One of the best ways to prepare for the SAT or PSAT/NMSQT is to use [Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy](#)®. It's free, it's online, and it gives you a personalized practice plan based on your scores on a previous SAT or PSAT/NMSQT or on short quizzes you take on Khan Academy.

Websites for additional information include [College Board](#) (PSAT, SAT, Accuplacer, CLEP, and AP) and [ACT](#) (Pre-ACT, Aspire, ACT).

E-Library Minnesota provides free online access to prep tests through the Learning Express Library. The Learning Express Library is geo-located for authentication so a library card is not necessary. Please visit the [Learning Express Library website](#) for more information.

## 19. Are there concerns about the privacy of data I report on a home-schooling registration? Because of our situation, it is unsafe for our location to be known by some people.

The local school district may not release your home-school registration information to outside inquirers other than military recruiters. However, if your family still has concerns, you may want to explore the [Safe at Home](#)

program through the Minnesota Secretary of State's office. The Safe at Home program will assign a post office box to your address and provide mail-forwarding services. This post office box may be used as your legal address.

## **20. If my child most recently was a public school student in an open enrollment district or a charter school, does this change where I register or where my child has a right to participate in extracurricular activities?**

Once you begin home-schooling, the open enrollment or charter school enrollment is finished. Your registration responsibilities and the right to participate in extracurricular activities rests with your resident school district, even if your child had been previously enrolled elsewhere.

## **Additional Questions**

### **1. I still have questions about home-schooling in Minnesota. Who can help?**

Contact the home-school liaison in your resident school district superintendent's office for information about home-school registration. If you do not know where this is, use this [school district finder](#).

For information about home-school law and policy, contact the MDE Ombudsperson, [Cindy Jackson](#), at (651) 582-8572 or visit the Office of the Revisor of Statutes and review statutes by topic: [Home Schools](#).

Consider joining a home-school co-op and/or statewide organization so that you can meet other families who home-school and receive up-to-date information. A home-school conference is another way to make connections, attend workshops, and review curricula. Currently there are three home-school conferences held annually in Minnesota. Please visit the websites of home education associations listed below for additional details:

- [Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators](#) (MACHE)
- [Minnesota Catholic Home Education](#)
- [Minnesota Homeschoolers' Alliance](#)