

Choices in addition to homeschooling

Minnesota offers expansive school choice that includes public and nonpublic options. Public options include your resident school district, open enrollment across district lines, magnet schools, charter schools, certified public online learning and alternative education. Minnesota also has many regular nonpublic schools, some of which offer substantial financial aid.

Compulsory instruction

Minnesota's compulsory instruction law requires all children **age 7-17** to attend a public or private school. Homeschools are a type of private school. See Minnesota Statutes, Section 120A.22.

Registering with local school district

A parent who teaches homeschool must turn in a **Full Report** to the student's resident school superintendent:

- **By October 1** of the first year the child is homeschooled after reaching age seven.
- **Within 15 days** of withdrawing a child from public school to homeschool.

Within 15 days of moving out of a district, the parent must notify the old district of the move. They must turn in the Full Report to the new district by October 1 of the next year.

In subsequent years, the parent turns in a **Letter of Intent to Continue to Provide Instruction** by October 1 of each year.

Full Reports and Letters of Intent to Continue to Provide Instruction are available on the MDE Enrollment Choices webpage. You do not have to use

these documents; you can submit this information to the school district in a different format.

Testing

Homeschooled students must take a nationally normed achievement test every year, unless the homeschool is accredited by a state-recognized accrediting agency. You and the superintendent must agree on which test your child will take, and how and where they will take it.

If you are filing a Full Report in fall 2014, your student must take the test until age 17. If you are filing a Letter of Intent in fall 2014, your student must take the test until age 16.

We recommend the Iowa Test of Basic Skills or the Stanford Achievement Test. Both tests are available from the University of Minnesota. The ACT (www.actstudents.org) is an option for high school students.

Supplemental testing is required to the extent that the nationally normed test does not encompass all required subject areas. (See 'Curriculum.')

There are exceptions to the testing requirement based on the instructor's qualifications. See Minnesota Statute 120A.22, Subd. 11 (b).

Low scores on nationally normed achievement test: If your student scores at or below the 30th percentile on the test, you must evaluate their abilities to determine whether they have learning problems.

Curriculum

Your student must receive instruction in reading and writing, literature and fine arts, mathematics and science, social studies including history, geography and government, and health and physical education.

We do not help select the curriculum for private schools, including homeschools.

If you want a curriculum that aligns to Minnesota state standards, consider public online learning (public school at home) instead of homeschooling. See Online Learning topic.

Besides the textbook loan program provided under Aids to Nonpublic Students, homeschooled students cannot borrow other textbooks or materials from their resident district. (See Aids to Nonpublic Students.)

Documentation and scores

State law requires documentation that the required subject areas are being taught, the agreed-upon tests are administered, and proof of the test scores. Documentation can include class schedules, copies of instructional materials, and descriptions of the methods used to assess achievement. See 'Curriculum' and 'Testing' topics as well as Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, Subd. 9 and 10A.22, Subd. 11.

This information must be provided to public school districts upon transfer. It also must be provided to county attorneys when they need to determine whether educational neglect or reporting or testing violations have occurred.

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

- Administration of tests.
- Interviews or conferences with the students.
- Conferences with the parent/guardian.
- Review of the curriculum.
- Review of the student's record of achievement.
- Review of the work the student completed.

Diplomas and transcripts

Homeschools issue their own transcripts and diplomas. The Minnesota Department of Education does not certify or validate these. We do not keep records of any homeschooled student, nor can we help locate homeschool records.

Extracurricular activities

Homeschools and other very small nonpublic schools (five or fewer students) may participate in their resident school district's extracurricular activities, as defined by law. See Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.49. For more information about this provision and related policies, contact the Minnesota High School League at 763-560-2262.

Part-time public school enrollment (shared time)

Resident public school districts must allow homeschool students to receive shared-time special education services.

Nonpublic school students—including homeschoolers—without an IEP can also 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.

One important limitation exists at the state level. Minnesota law blocks nonpublic students, including homeschoolers, from using shared time to access Minnesota K-12 public online learning courses without paying tuition.

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.

Shared Time is for nonpublic students who are registered and enrolled in regular private schools or homeschools. These students can access public school courses subject to local policy. However, the law is not designed as a means for public school students to occasionally take a homeschool 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.

Online learning as a public school student

Certified public online learning is 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 and public school diplomas. For more information, see the MDE online learning page.

Because this is a full-time public school option, these students are not registered as homeschoolers. If the full-time online program is not part of the students resident district, they register either through the Minnesota Statewide Enrollment Options program (open enrollment), requesting the online school as the desired school within that district, or, if the online program is offered through a public charter school, through that charter school's application process.

Aids to Nonpublic Students

Parents of students in regular private schools often pay for most of their students' tuition, and so do homeschooling families. A small amount of financial assistance is available through the Aids to Nonpublic Students program. You must meet the following deadlines if you want aid:

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

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

By October 15: Your resident school district submits information to MDE, allowing you to access up to:

- \$91.60 per eligible pupil for textbooks, standardized tests and individual instructional materials on a loan basis, if available. All items purchased with nonpublic pupil aid funds must be secular, neutral, and nonideological material used by, or of benefit to Minnesota public school students. These funds may now also be used for ACT testing.
- \$74.98 per eligible student for Pupil Health Services.
- \$255.57 for Secondary Pupil Guidance and Counseling Services.

Students must be age 5 by September 1 to be eligible for any aid. Unless kindergarteners are in full-day programs, they receive pro-rated half-time funding.

Tax breaks

See Minnesota Department of Revenue's Individual Income Tax Fact Sheet 8 to learn about Minnesota's K-12 education tax credit and subtraction to determine whether some costs or taxable income can be reduced.

Homeschools may also be exempt from sales tax on some items. Complete the Department of Revenue's Application for Nonprofit Exempt Status - Sales Tax. For information on what items may be eligible for sales tax exemption, contact the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

Educational neglect and homeschool reporting violations

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

Superintendents initially handle reporting and testing violations, seeking to bring situations into compliance with state law. If they are unable to do so, they must contact the Commissioner of Education for fact finding and mediation. If fact finding and mediation does not resolve the situation in the designated time frame, the superintendent must refer the matter to the county attorney for prosecution. When an educational neglect or reporting violation case concerning a homeschooled student is opened under Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.26, Subdivision 5, or chapter 260C or diverted under chapter 260A, all documentation and test scores required to be maintained must be provided to the county attorney. (See 'Documentation.')

Postsecondary Enrollment Options for homeschoolers

Nonpublic school students, including homeschoolers, may participate in Postsecondary Enrollment Options by applying directly to a participating public or private postsecondary program. Students must meet the admissions criteria of the institution. Nonpublic

students, including homeschoolers, are not eligible to participate in PSEO career and technical education options as tenth graders though public school sophomores may do so. See the MDE Postsecondary Enrollment Options landing page for more information.

Driver's education

Contact the Minnesota Department of Public Safety to learn about options for classroom driver's education that are only available to full-time homeschooled students in situations that will lead to a homeschool high school diploma.

Accreditation

Minnesota recognizes one accrediting association for accrediting homeschools. It is the Minnesota Home-Based Educators Accrediting Association (HBEAA). Homeschools accredited by this association have some reporting and testing requirements reduced. For more information, contact HBEAA at 952-935-9234 or hbeaa@gmail.com. Visit their website at www.hbeaa.org.

Other accrediting organizations of homeschools or regular nonpublic schools may apply for state recognition through an established, comprehensive review process of the Minnesota Nonpublic Education Council. See information on the process for becoming a state recognized accrediting agency on the MDE Nonpublic Education Council page.

Contacts

Contact the homeschool liaison in your school superintendent's office at 763-477-9165 for information about homeschool registration and Aids to Nonpublic Students.

Contact the special education director in your resident school district for information about receiving shared-time special education services for a homeschooled student.

State homeschool policy: Cindy Jackson, Minnesota Department of Education Office of Equity and Innovation, cindy.s.jackson@state.mn.us, 651-582-8572.

State contact for school district questions on Aids to Nonpublic Student: greg.sogaard@state.mn.us, 651-582-8858.

Contact the participating Post-Secondary Education Options provider for information on their requirements and processes for participating as an 11th or 12th grade homeschool student.