

Home Education

Shortcut to LIFE Homeschooling in Florida FAQ

Shortcut to state Legislative Watch

Home Education in Florida is part of the FL DOEs Office of School Choice (http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/home_education/) and covered under Part IV of Chapter 1002 of the Florida Education Code, entitled Home Education, Private Schools and Other Educational Options. Each of the three options covered under this part of the education code -- Home Education, Private Schools and Private Tutoring programs -- offer ways to more personally direct your child's education.

Reads the Home Education page of the Dept. of Education: ”

Home Education is a parent-directed educational option that became effective by law in 1985. Parents have the freedom to determine their child's educational path and the plan for reaching their goals. Students have the opportunity to explore and learn at their own pace, in any location or at any time. More than 55,000 students in approximately 37,000 families are in Home Education Programs in Florida. ”

The basic state requirements for home education in Florida consist of:

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- written notice to the district superintendent of intent to establish a home education program
-
- maintenance of a portfolio of records and materials that contains a log of educational activities and reading materials used, writing samples, worksheets, workbooks, and any other materials used or created by the child;
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- and an annual educational evaluation of the child's educational progress.

The parent or guardian may select the method of evaluation, which can be

- a review of the portfolio and discussion with the student by a Florida certified teacher chosen by the parent or guardian;
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- a nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;
- a state student assessment test administered by a certified teacher, at a location and under testing conditions approved by the school district;

-
an evaluation by a psychologist holding a valid, active license;

-
or an evaluation by any other valid measurement tool that is mutually agreed upon by the superintendent and the parent or guardian.

The complete statutes regarding home education can be found in School Code Chapter 1002, entitled Student and Parental Rights and Educational Choices. A copy of the statutes and additional home education information can be requested from the Home Education office by contacting by calling (800) 447-1636.

There is an informative DOE Home Education FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) online at http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/home_education/faqs.asp , which can also be requested in hard copy.

Because home education is a fully parent directed educational choice, it's important to stay informed about your choice and connected with others who practice it. Education Policy Analyst Christopher Fenton , is the FL DOE's Home Education Specialist and can be contacted via email at Christopher.Fenton@fldoe.org or by calling (850) 245-0502.

Visit LIFE of Florida to learn more about our statewide homeschool support group.

Read on for our comprehensive LIFE Homeschooling in Florida FAQ, a Comparison of Home Based Learning Options in Florida , and visit our Home Education Resources pages for more links and information about homeschooling in general, as well as our Florida Statewide Networking and Resources .

Learning is for Everyone's

Homeschooling in Florida FAQ

www.learningis4everyone.org

Updated September 2008

FAQ Shortcuts:

FS 1002.41 Sections 1-3

FS 1002.41 Sections 4-9

Other Stuff - private schools, reenrollment, virtual schools, diplomas

The following FAQ is a compilation of information from technical assistance meetings, and from previous Q&A s on file with LIFE Inc. We hope this helps you find your way around homeschooling in Florida

Q.I think I want to homeschool. How do I do that?

A. First, please take time to inform yourself about homeschooling laws. And then realize that there are no right or wrong ways to homeschool. There are as many ways to homeschool your children as there are homeschoolers (55,000 in Florida, now pushing 2 million nationally, according to recent statistics). There are endless resources for exploring methodologies, including "unschooling" (no particular method at all), on the web. We have a comprehensive overview on our website, in our Homeschool Resource Guide.

Q. What are the laws for homeschooling in Florida? Do they vary from county to county?

A. Great questions . First, homeschooling is overseen by state laws, not county ones. While counties may vary in their interpretation of those laws sometimes, the long and the short of it is that your personal homeschool practices are guided by inviolable state laws.

Learning is for Everyone has a complete overview of education in Florida at our state page at <http://www.learningis4everyone.org/content/category/7/45/39/> . You can learn specifically about homeschooling in FL by clicking on the Home Education section (<http://www.learningis4everyone.org/content/view/94/39/0>).

Florida has pretty "user-friendly" homeschool laws, and a great Department of Education website section devoted to providing you with a wealth of information about all the whys and wherefores of home education in the Sunshine State: http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/home_education/

Read on for a look at FS1002.41 Sections 1-3

FS 1002.41 Sections 4-9

Other Stuff - private schools, reenrollment, virtual schools, diplomas

FS 1002.41 Sections 1-3

Q. Okay, the laws look pretty good, but can you restate them in plain English?

A. Sure. Let's break down what FS 1002.41 is saying

1) A "home education program" is defined in s. 1002.01. The parent is not required to hold a valid regular Florida teaching certificate.

1002.01 just says a home education program is sequentially progressive instruction (proceeding at progressively higher levels year to year), directed by a parent/guardian in order to satisfy compulsory attendance laws (ages 6-16) in Florida. And you don't have to be a certified teacher to teach your child. Nor do you have to do the teaching. You direct your child's education, meaning you can use tutors, cooperative learning programs, correspondence programs, etc. Even if you do not teach your child yourself, however, you are responsible for satisfying the letter of the law with respect to home education, and must comply with annual evaluation and other related requirements.

a) The parent shall notify the district school superintendent of the county in which the parent resides of her or his intent to establish and maintain a home education program. A written notice of termination of the home education program shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days after said termination.

This means send your district a note, keeping a copy for yourself, preferably via certified mail with a return receipt requested (depending upon where you live, sometimes a letter of acknowledgement is sent, sometimes not).

The notice shall be in writing, signed by the parent, and shall include the names, addresses, and birthdates of all children who shall be enrolled as

students in the home education program.

That means that you should include in your note:

1. the names of your school age kids, (ages 6 – 16 only please – newborns to five year olds are not of compulsory attendance age and your eagerness to educate them notwithstanding, they cannot be legally enrolled in the home education program, and early requests are often returned)
2. their address and
3. their birthdates
4. saying that you intend to home educate them, and
5. Sign and date the letter.

The notice shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days of the establishment of the home education program.

This just means send them your letter within 30 days of establishing your program – not prior to establishing it, or telling them that you're considering establishing one. And please don't send the district a letter saying you want to start your program in six months or so. They'll “open” your program the date they receive your letter, and that will always be the date from which your annual program is dated. Your letter of intent to the school district should NOT include:

Your life story or that of your children's;
Social security numbers;
Grade designations – you don't need to say what specific grade level you'll be teaching your children, a nice piece of freedom that leaves you great latitude in teaching to your child's ability rather than age;
Health issues;
Political or religious opinions;
Explanations of what you plan to teach and why;
Lists of books or curriculum you plan to use;
Your educational philosophy or
Your opinions about what's wrong with public education today.

A written notice of termination of the home education program shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days after said termination.

And if you decide this isn't for you, please be sure to tell them! Send a note to the school district advising them of your intent to close your program (you don't need any details about your plans), with the name, address and birthdate of the child withdrawn from the program. As always, use certified mail to ensure your correspondence is received.

- Okay, the portfolio is a disproportionately discussed and stressed over thing, for some reason. A "portfolio" by definition, refers to "a personal collection of information describing and documenting a person's achievements and learning." That means it's different for everyone, for each child in your family, and that you and your child have complete creative license in creating one. Portfolios can be
 - o an accordion folder with a selection of items in it across several subjects like writing, geography, history, art, etc.;
 - o one of the increasingly popular "ePortfolios" on a CD featuring Word documents, photographs and scanned copies of artwork; Check out <http://electronicportfolios.com/blog/> <http://www.danwilton.com/eportfolios/> , or <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI3001.pdf>
 - o a scrapbook, or a
 - o a file folder, or several file folders
 - o or any other way you find to collect, save and showcase your child's work.

The portfolio shall consist of the following:

- Put this stuff in it:

1. A log of educational activities that is made contemporaneously with the instruction and that designates by title any reading materials used.

- The "educational activities made contemporaneously with instruction" can consist of day book entries, a running list, an Excel spreadsheet or anything in more or less chronological order.

2. Samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student.

- That means just that – your kids's stuff, of your own and your child's choosing, selections of work that you feel are representative of your child's best or most interesting work

· It does NOT mean:

- You have to include everything your child did every day of the year (unless you want to, but that becomes a pretty bulky collection over time.

- School attendance dates. Homeschoolers are exempt from the public school attendance requirement of 180 days (FS 1002.41 2(3)),

- and you do not have to homeschool for any particular number of days.

The portfolio shall be preserved by the parent for 2 years and shall be made available for inspection by the district school superintendent, or the district school superintendent's agent, upon 15 days' written notice. Nothing in this section shall require the district school superintendent to inspect the portfolio.

Stick

the whole thing in the attic for a couple of years and then toss it, or keep it forever to enjoy in your old age, or to embarrass your kids when they're teens. If they already are teens, they may want to collect the high school level stuff into a college admissions portfolio.

The

school district can look at your portfolio with 15 days written notice, but that doesn't mean they have to do so regularly or ever. Most districts never ask. A few ask all the time. Just keep it handy.

(c) The parent shall provide for an annual educational evaluation in which is documented the student's demonstration of educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability. The parent shall select the method of evaluation and shall file a copy of the evaluation annually with the district school superintendent's office in the county in which the student resides.

That means, once a year, on the anniversary of the date you opened your homeschool program – NOT

- o a date the county assigns you, nor
 - o automatically at the end of the public school year, unless that’s the anniversary of when you opened your program, nor
 - o several weeks after that anniversary,
- but one year from the date you opened your program, you must have a copy of the evaluation you choose in your school district office.,

The annual educational evaluation shall consist of one of the following

- You select one of several legally prescribed ways to show the state you’ve been successfully homeschooling your child. These are:

1. A teacher selected by the parent shall evaluate the student's educational progress upon review of the portfolio and discussion with the student. Such teacher shall hold a valid regular Florida certificate to teach academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level;

[That means a teacher can look at the portfolio and discuss it with the student and parent, and then sign a statement that says the child he or she reviewed proved to have progressed commensurate (along) with ability as per state law – and that’s the evaluation statement you send your county. Many people choose this method of assessment because it’s relaxed and personal, and gives everyone in the family a good opportunity to evaluate the year.]

2. The student shall take any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;

[That means your child can take any of the typical achievement tests as long as it’s administered by a certified teacher. The results DO NOT need to be included in the evaluation report, only a comment by the teacher or parent advising that student results showed progress commensurate with ability, as per state law.]

3. The student shall take a state student assessment test used by the school district and administered by a certified teacher, at a location and under testing conditions approved by the school district;

[Sort of a restatement of the above, but with respect to state assessment tests, like the FCAT, rather than national tests. PLEASE NOTE: If you choose to have your child evaluated using the FCAT, those results are automatically submitted to the county school board and that will be your annual evaluation, whether your child did well or didn’t do well.]

4. The student shall be evaluated by an individual holding a valid, active license pursuant to the provisions of s. 490.003(7) or (8); or

[Your child can be evaluated by a psychologist or a school psychologist using whatever assessment tools you agree upon, and then a statement to that effect can be submitted to the school district.]

5. The student shall be evaluated with any other valid measurement tool as mutually agreed upon by the district school superintendent of the district in which the student resides and the student's parent.

[You can meet with or talk to your county school superintendent and discuss any other method you feel might be best for your child.]

(2) The district school superintendent shall review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation of the student in a home education program.

- That means they gotta just accept it unless…

If the student does not demonstrate educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability, the district school superintendent shall notify the parent, in writing, that such progress has not been achieved.

·Unless, for some reason, they feel your child hasn't demonstrated educational progress along the lines of his or her ability, which only happens if:

- o You send in test scores each year and one year the test scores are worse than those of the year before;

- o You fail to send in evaluations at all;

- o Or a teacher evaluating your child alerts the school board to the fact that perhaps your child isn't learning as desired.

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The above are avoided by:

- o Not sending in test scores, especially if your child doesn't test well. It also helps to be informed about the law and to be ready to remind the county that *low* test scores (should you actually be choosing to send such in) do not immediately translate to poor progress, especially if test scores, however low,

are still higher than the previous year's. But there really isn't any need to send test scores in anyway.

- o Sending
in your evaluations in a timely fashion! Don't make the school board come looking for you.

- o Making
sure you select a teacher who understands homeschooling. Most teachers are very accommodating and understanding these days, and most homeschool support groups have lists of teachers who do evaluations.

The parent shall have 1 year from the date of receipt of the written notification to provide remedial instruction to the student. At the end of the 1-year probationary period, the student shall be reevaluated as specified in paragraph (1)

(c). Continuation in a home education program shall be contingent upon the student demonstrating educational progress commensurate with her or his ability at the end of the probationary period.

- If, for whatever reason, your child does not meet state requirements, your child will have one year to improve and be evaluated anew the following year, at which time, if conditions are met, your child will be taken off probation and your home school program continues as before.

(3) A home education program shall be excluded from meeting the requirements of a school day.

- That means just what it says -- you're free of public "school day" requirements

Read on for a look at Sections 4-9

FS 1002.41 Sections 1-3

Other Stuff - private schools, reenrollment, virtual schools, diplomas

FS 1002.41 Sections 4-9

Q. Wow! That clears up everything. I guess I just need to be informed and use common sense in conducting my home education program. Here's another question: Can my homeschooled child participate in public school sport, or extracurricular activities and qualify for scholarships and all that stuff?

A. Yep. Witness FS 1002.41 section 4 through 9 :

(4) Home education students may participate in interscholastic extracurricular student activities in accordance with the provisions of s. 1006.15.

1006.15 says home education students can participate in public school extracurricular activities at the public school at which they'd normally be assigned, or to which they'd normally be eligible under school choice options, or under any agreement with a private school, if they:

- o Meet all of the above home education requirements;
- o Demonstrate, during the period of participation at a school, educational progress in all subjects taken in the home education program by a method of evaluation agreed upon by the parent and the school principal
- o Meet standard residency requirements
- o Meet standards of behavior and conduct required by the school in which they are participating in programs
- o Register with the appropriate school with his or her intent to participate in a program

A few

additional details can be read in FS1006.15, regarding decisions to enroll in the public school, and inability to maintain academic eligibility, but the above are the most relevant.

And as of July 2007, as per the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) , home education students have to complete an EL07 form. You can learn a little background about this on our LIFE of Florida website at <http://lifeofflorida.blogspot.com/> and find more information and the forms at the FHSAA website at <http://www.fhsaa.org/compliance/> .

(5) Home education students may participate in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program in accordance with the provisions of ss. 1009.53-1009.539.

You can read all about this great scholarship program at the Bright Futures website: www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf . Please inquire there with specific questions.

(6) Home education students may participate in dual enrollment programs in accordance with the provisions of ss. 1007.27(4) and 1007.271(10).

Another great option for all Florida students, dual enrollment allows high school students to enroll in post secondary courses in state colleges, tuition free. Eligible students may even complete their final year of high school at a local college.

As per the Bureau of Public School Options (<http://www.fldoe.org/flbpso/otherpubschopt/dualenrollment.asp>) , “[Dual Enrolled students] earn credit toward high school graduation and at the same time earn credit toward a college degree or technical certificate. All 28 public community colleges and some of the state universities in Florida participate in dual enrollment. Students are permitted to take dual enrollment courses on a part-time basis during school hours, after school, or during the summer term. Dual enrollment students do not have to pay registration, matriculation, or laboratory.”

The best place to become fully educated about dual enrollment is at the DoEs Office of Articulation website at <http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/>
This page is a phenomenal resource for any and

all questions regarding post secondary education. Of particular value to the high school student is the state's FACT (Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students) page at <http://www.facts.org/> where you and your child can explore an enormous variety of resources, and where the Office of Articulation files all of its information about dual enrollment and other early college credit options: http://facts23.facts.org/navigation/detail/college_credit.do?pagelId=16

On August 25, 2006, the DOE issued a Technical Assistance Paper to provide further clarification and assistance to home educators and to secondary institutions trying to accommodate them: http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-3909/homeed_att.pdf

(7) Home education students are eligible for admission to community colleges in accordance with the provisions of s. 1007.263.

(8) Home education students are eligible for admission to state universities in accordance with the provisions of s. 1007.261.

Both of those just mean home education students can apply to attend state colleges and universities just like everyone else. Some good resources for homeschool students coming into post secondary education with a non-traditional background include:

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), at <http://www.nacacnet.org>, features an excellent article on its website called,

"College Admission for the Home-Schooler" (or <http://tinyurl.com/ftvao>) that provides a comprehensive overview of how homeschoolers can most successfully apply for college enrollment.

An ERIC Digest from 2003 includes some useful information for the college bound as well: <http://www.ericdigests.org/2005-2/homeschooling.html>

(9) Home education program students may receive testing and evaluation services at diagnostic and resource centers, in accordance with the provisions of s. 1006.03.

This means your child, like every other child in the state, is eligible to receive any special needs diagnostic evaluation and testing services. You can visit the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Clearinghouse at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/clerhome.asp> , or the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FLDRS) website to learn more: <http://www.paec.org/fdlrsweb/>

Q. Speaking of Exceptional Education, homeschooling looks like it might work pretty well for my special needs child. Do I have to do anything special with respect to enrolling her in the home education program?

A. Technical Assistance Paper 312790 , at www.fl DOE.org/ESE/pdf/y2006-16.pdf , issued in June 2006, deals with just this issue. In November 2006, the FL DOE clarified some points in the ruling. The memo reads:

"In an effort to improve the quantity and quality of educational outcomes for students with disabilities, the Bureau developed a technical assistance paper (TAP) 312790 dated June 2006, entitled Serving Students with Disabilities through Modified Schedule and/or Home Instruction.

"Providing instruction in the parent's home or mutually agreed upon location would require parental permission as the parent or guardian would have to make accommodations. Such permission may be documented through the individual educational plan (IEP) conference notes or some other informal means at the district's discretion. On page three of the TAP it previously stated, "Prior written notice of change of placement would have to be completed because services would be different from current services." The TAP also stated, "parental consent would be required." This is not to be interpreted to mean a formal parental consent. The TAP 312815, dated August 2006, has been revised to reflect this clarification and replaces the original TAP 312790, dated June 2006."

You can contact Dr. Lee Clark, Program Specialist with the Florida Department of Education, by telephone at (850) 245-0478 or by electronic mail at lee.clark@fldoe.orgThis e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it

if you have additional questions.

Read on for more on private schools, virtual schools, reenrolling in public schools and diplomas and transcripts.

FS 1002.41 Sections 1-3

FS 1002.41 Sections 4-9

Q. Wow (again)! This is looking pretty good. But I don't know about all that record keeping stuff you went over earlier. Can I homeschool through something I heard about called an "umbrella school"? And would I still have access to all of that other stuff?

A. For the most part, yes, as long as you keep in mind that the state will consider your children private school students if you choose this route.

"Umbrella school" is something of a misnomer, and typically refers to a private school that offers a self-directed home learning option. Private schools can do that here because the state of Florida maintains a pretty much "hands off" policy with respect to private schools.

You can read more about private schools in our Florida Private Schools section. And you can find listings of private schools that offer home based learning options at various sites, including A to Z Home's Cool website at <http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/regional/FloridaUmbrella.htm>, and at FloridaSmart at http://www.floridasmart.com/education/homesch_schools.htm.

Keep in mind though, that private schools are free to make their own rules regarding attendance and record keeping, and can range from minimalist to mind-boggling. The DoE also maintains a list of private schools, although many of these are traditional brick and mortar private schools:

http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Private_Schools/default.asp?whichView=parent So if you go that route, be sure to be educated about your private school choice, and stay up to date on private school legislation.

Also, be aware that if you want access to things like Florida Virtual School, or certain other things available only to public or homeschooled students, sometimes those are only available to specially registered private schools.

Q. Okay, what the heck is Florida Virtual School? Is that a private school? A public school? Or is it a correspondence school? Will my kid have to take the FCAT if he's enrolled in Florida Virtual School? Would my child get a diploma from that school? Can we just enroll in that and call it a day?

A. Florida Virtual School (www.flvs.net) is not a private school, or a correspondence school. It's a distinctly different offering from the state's two other public school virtual school offerings, Florida Virtual Academy and Connections Academy, which are available only to public school students.

FLVS is a public online middle and high school equally available to all state residents. Since it is not a degree granting school, state testing (i.e. the FCAT) is not mandated.

The state describes FLVS thusly in a Policy

Memo:(http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/virtual_schools/files/FLVS_Policy_Memo.pdf):

“Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is a fully-accredited public virtual school that offers free online courses to middle and high school students in Florida. All FLVS teachers are Florida-certified in the subjects they teach and all courses are aligned with Florida’s Sunshine State Standards.

“Florida Virtual School provides options for students, parents, school districts, and schools. Through FLVS, parents and students have expanded access to courses, and school districts have options to help ease overcrowding and/or to provide their students with additional course and acceleration opportunities.

“Students with limited or no access to a specific course are given priority for enrollment. Florida Virtual School may also be a good fit for students who have medical or behavioral issues that may limit success in the traditional classroom or for students needing a more flexible schedule due to training for other extra-curricular endeavors.

The Florida School Code establishes Florida Virtual School as an educational choice and an acceleration option for parents and students. Approximately 96 percent of FLVS students exercise this option as a supplement to their public, home, or private school education and average 1.1 courses per student.” (Read the entire memo at the link above to see a good Q&A about the school)

Some people really like it and some people really don't. But there's no cost involved, and you can take classes a la carte, as interested and able, and easily un-enroll if the program

doesn't work for your children. Transcripts from FLVS classes can be used in annual evaluations, and useful for transfer reasons, as well.

Related statutes can be reviewed here: http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/virtual_schools/Statutes.asp

In the past year, FLVS franchised operations to some state school districts for the purposes of streamlining participation for public school students. You can see a list of the franchises here:
http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/virtual_schools/District_Franchises.asp

All this means is that residents in those counties can select to take classes either with their county, or with the main Florida Virtual School program. For the most part, there is little difference between the two choices, although some counties have different drop policies and different instructors. Regardless of your choice, you may get a message that your homeschooled child’s course records are being filed with your county. This is an administrative detail with no bearing on your home education program. You can read an informative FAQ about the franchise issue at our website at <http://www.learningis4everyone.org/content/view/96/39/1/1/>.

Q. Speaking of diplomas, what's the deal there? Are high school diplomas even necessary? How about transcripts? Can my child make it into college without an official transcript or diploma?

A. The short answer to the last question is "Yes"; The short answer to the second question is: No. Diplomas are not absolutely necessary (when's the last time anyone looked at yours?). If you really want one for your child, you can make your own, but be aware that colleges, if they look at a diploma, typically want to see one from an accredited school.

Diplomas are less important than transcripts, which are less important than a well rounded, articulate and self assured student with a good portfolio of academic and real life experiences. Colleges are more often looking for self-motivated, responsible and self-sufficient students than anything else, and where they went to high school is less important than how they present themselves and what they can do.

See the college stuff mentioned earlier, and you can learn a bit about transcripts here:
<http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/olderkids/Transcripts.htm> and
<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/trans1.html#transcripts> And of course there's always the GED (General Education Development) test option (

<http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=GEDTS>) for a high school equivalency credential.

Q. Okay. Now let's say I've tried this homeschool thing for a year or so and decided it's just not my, or my child's, cup of tea: A great new charter school has opened up near me, or my kid's best friend is going to the local public school and now she wants to go, too, or my son just loves cafeteria food. How do I re-enroll? Will my child's home education work be accepted by the public school? Does he have to take a test to be placed in the appropriate grade level?

A. So glad you asked! First, there's no shame in homeschooling not working out for you. Kids change, family dynamics change, circumstances change. The great thing about education in Florida is that not only is the weather great most of the time, you've got more choices than you can shake a palm frond at. Because there are so many choices, the state DoE even got their act together on moving between those choices via the Uniform Credit Transfer Rule for high school students, which you can read for yourself at <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?id=6A-1.09941> . There's a valuable explanation of that explanation in the Technical Assistance Paper on this rule at http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-3794/transcredit_att.pdf

While some of the details are a little blurry and open to interpretation, what the rule basically says is that any homeschooled child entering or reentering public schools shall be accepted on the grade recommendation of the homeschooling parent, and that recommendation will be validated if the child maintains a 2.0 grade point average during the child's first grading period.

If your child has difficulty upon admission, the rule provides for some alternative methods of validation and assessment. For younger children, schools decide on placement upon re-enrollment, but will often take a parental documentation and homeschool history into account when doing so.

And don't forget to terminate your home education program!

As of August 10, 2006, you should also be aware of new public education high school graduation requirements. While these requirements do not affect you as a home educator, should you choose to reenroll your child in public education it may be helpful to be informed about these changes. Please visit our Public School Choice link at <http://www.learningis4everyone.org/content/view/93/39/1/1/> for details.

Q. Okay, that sounds more or less reasonable. Now what if I'm cruising along having a fine old time; I've sent in my evaluations on time, I'm complying with everything, my kids are learning so fast it makes my head spin, and I get this nasty-gram from my county telling me they never got my evaluation, or that my evaluation is due in June (when I started my program in November), or that they're terminating my program for some bizaare reason, or something like that? Just who do they think they are????!!!!

A. Throw a couple of more exclamation marks in there and I'll tell you who they are. "They" are largely folks like "you and me", with the sometimes unfortunate reality of having to work for the county.

Let's face it – bureaucracy stinks, for us and often for the bureaucrats. Things get lost. Files end up in the wrong place. Everybody yelled at you all day, and the coffee was stale and bitter. Most home education district contacts are overworked and underpaid. Many handle home education as just one of many district duties. Some just got there and haven't a clue as to how the whole thing works.

It's usually best to assume an error has occurred and to handle things with grace, dignity and professionalism. A simple and polite letter advising the powers that be of their error – providing a copy of your evaluation that you sent in perfectly on time six months ago; or a note reminding them of the date you opened your program, along with a copy of the relevant statute – usually does the trick. You don't need lawyers. You just need a good dose of humanity to share.

And there's always the possibility that they may be right. In that case, just send them a note thanking them for the reminder and advise them that you'll be sending along whatever is needed as soon as possible. Most are just happy for a civil reply. Keep as much of your communication as possible on paper, for good record keeping, and save copies of everything. Always request a return receipt when using written communications with your school district, to ensure that your notes are received.

Of course, you may occasionally encounter the district curmudgeon. If becomes clear that no amount of civility will crack the hard shell of years of government employment, then head to the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice (IEPC) and talk to the Home Education director there: 1-800-447-1636. They'll be glad to help.

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And if you don't feel they're helping as they should, then call in some citizen support. We, at Learning is for Everyone, (www.learningis4everyone.org) will be happy to help you, as would folks with other support groups like Florida Parent Educators Association (www.fpea.com/) .

So there you have it. Relax, and have a great time with your kids! Browse our site for tons of great statewide homeschooling resources and don't forget to check out our support group listings so that you can connect with others in your area.

Happy Homeschooling!

www.learningis4everyone.org

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[School District Virtual School Programs \(SDVIP\) - HB 7067 and SB 534](#)

[November 2009](#)

There are emails going around, on both sides of the fence, about virtual school program legislation currently under consideration in FL (SB 534 and HB 7067). Some of the emails encourage signing a petition to allow home educators to participate in School District Virtual School Programs (SDVIP) without previous enrollment in public school, and others protest the legislation.

All home educators are urged to become informed about virtual school choices in Florida, whatever your opinion or preference regarding the schools, and to make sure you have all the facts (or as many as you can find) rather than acting on fear based or uninformed arguments on either side.

Support for SDVIP Enrollment Expansion

With respect to the petition, found at <http://www.flvirtualfamilies.org/petition/> and this particular phraseology: "In looking at this law, it is a great tool for those parents that would choose to homeschool." …

It's important to remember that SDVIP is great tool for those interested in having a *public school education option that they can administer from home*.

Participants need to understand that the laws under which those enrolled in this program would provide that education are different from homeschooling laws.

The petition calls on Florida representatives "to change the portion of House Bill 7067 that states a child must attend public school for one year to qualify for this program. We feel that this discriminates against children that previously home schooled or that would have to come out of private school that would want to use this program. Parents of all children should have the option to use this if they so chose. Treat all children fair"

Grammar issues aside, the bill doesn't actually discriminate against homeschooled children or anyone else. This is a procedural issue, not a home education issue . Transferring to SDVIP should be handled as any public, private or homeschool program transfer is handled, using existing Florida State Board of Education transfer rules.

Opposition to SDVIP

Long time home and private school lobbyist Brenda Dickinson, of the Home Education Foundation, is concerned about the Senate version of SDVIP legislation, SB 534, for other reasons, principally her contention that SDVIP "will lead to the demise of home education as we know it."

In a recent email, referencing a Christian Broadcasting Network article titled "Online Charter Schools Proving Popular" she contends:

"

Parents are going to be more confused about virtual education than they were last year if Charter Virtual Schools are created in Florida. This year some parents who have enrolled their children in the School District Virtual School Programs (SDVIP) are forming their own support groups and asking for membership in the Florida Parent Educators Association. They think they are home educators. However, students enrolled in a SDVIP, using K-12, Inc and Connections Academy are not home educated students; they are public school students. I believe in a short time this confusion will lead to the demise of home education as we know it.

"...SB 534 is filed for the 2010 Session and will create the same virtual charter school in Florida

described in the article My question is: How long will home education parents be able to direct their children's education if these schools are established in Florida?

Many parents are afraid to step out on their own to take over the education of their children under the home education law, so this highly structured program will appeal to those parents. Within a few years, there will be almost no one in the elementary grades who develops their own curriculum and tailors it to their own child's interest, pace and learning style. Most parents, new to home education, will be persuaded that this is the only way to teach your child at home."

The virtual school induced death knell has been rung for homeschooling for almost ten years now, with no significant evidence of deliterious effect to home education. Almost identical complaints were leveled at Florida Virtual School at the time, even though now, FLVS is lauded by many of the same homeschoolers as a model virtual program for home educators. If trust parents to make an intelligent and informed choice to homeschool, we must also trust that they're making an intelligent and informed decision if they select the use of a public virtual school.

Home education is, in fact, changing and has been since its inception. But that's different from suffering a "demise." More people than ever are aware that they can in some great measure influence and direct their children's education, perhaps not as completely as some of us have chosen, but more than many more people ever would have considered doing.

A future now suggests itself where everyone tailors his or her education to best suit individual needs, interests and abilities. This has the potential to bring a far higher quality of family life and education to more people than does circling the wagons to protect "home education as we know it." Life as people knew it a hundred, two hundred, three hundred years ago no longer exists. While some good things are lost to time and history, many more good things have been gained: civil rights, greater longevity, multiculturalism, fascinating and useful technology, and more access to knowledge than ever before.

Get the Facts

With any of the virtual school arguments or supplications, important points of clarification should be:

Sources and evidence for "slippery slope" arguments of doom; Specific studies regarding virtual school program effects on home education;

Specific instances of school district strong-arming (some emails claim school districts are performing portfolio reviews with the intention of intimidating parents into choosing SDVIP programs);

Focus on real issues: equitable application of uniform transfer rules, or truth in advertising for SDVIP programs – issues that apply across the board to all families trying to make informed decisions.

Advocating and empowering all families to make informed educational decisions for themselves and their children is, in the long run, the best way to protect homeschooling.

You can read more about HB 7067 at

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=39535>

www.fldoe.org/GR/Bill_Summary/2008/HB7067.pdf

www.fldoe.org/gr/li/Q&A-DistrictVIP.pdf (Q&A)

And about SB 537 at <http://bit.ly/2ZPaKm>

(For the record, any virtual school families seeking support and resources are very welcome to join Learning is for Everyone of Florida . We don't care how you learn at home, and we're happy to help you make the most of your time together with your children.)

Bright Futures Update - March 2008:

Home Education Foundation

lobbyist Brenda Dickinson recently sent out an update regarding pending legislation addressing how homeschoolers qualify for Bright Futures. Her entire explanation can be found at LIFE of FL , but the gist of the changes are that private schools are specifically included in the new language, and the test score is no longer specified, but is tied to the relevant statute.

Current requirements can be found here:

<http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/ssfad/bf/fmsrequire.htm>

And visit <http://tinyurl.com/22xh5t> to read HB 957 and

<http://tinyurl.com/37z96c> to read SB 2262

to read the proposed legislation. Both bills are identical, and this seems to be the text in question, regarding students eligible for Bright Futures:

(b) Has attended a home education program according to s.1002.41 at least during grades 11 and 12 and has attained a score of at least 100 points higher than the score identified by rules of the State Board of Education under paragraph (a) on the combined verbal and quantitative parts of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the Scholastic Assessment Test, or the recentered Scholastic Assessment Test of the College Entrance Examination, or an equivalent score on the ACT Assessment Program; or has attended a home education program according to s. 1002.41 at least during grades 11 and 12, has documented successful completion of a college-preparatory curriculum as outlined in paragraph (a) through a Florida public school, a private school registered with the Department of Education, or dual enrollment pursuant to s. 1007.271, and has attained at least the score identified by rules of the State Board of Education under paragraph (a) on the combined verbal and quantitative parts of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the Scholastic Assessment Test, or the recentered Scholastic Assessment Test of the College Entrance Examination, or an equivalent score on the ACT Assessment Program;

Essentially, the changes are saying homeschooled students *without* public ed credits from FLVS, or from part time or dual enrollment, can qualify for BF with "a score of at least 100 points higher than the score identified by rules of the State Board of Education under paragraph (a)..."

But those using FLVS, part time enrolled at a public school, or at an "approved" private school, or dual enrolled at a local college can qualify by having successfully documented "completion of a college-preparatory curriculum as outlined in paragraph (a) through a Florida public school, a private school registered with the Department of Education, or dual enrollment pursuant to s. 1007.271," and can then earn a BF with the same college entrance score as public school students ("at least the score identified by rules of the State Board of Education under paragraph (a).")

The bill will be voted on this summer.

LIFE encourages you to make educated decisions about legislation that may affect you and to get all the facts necessary to make those decisions.