

ISBE Home School FAQ

1. What home school laws or requirements must I follow as a parent or guardian?

I. You must provide instruction in English in the following subject areas:

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Biological and Physical Science
- Social Science (Social Studies)
- Fine Arts
- Physical Development and Health ([105 ILCS 5/27-1](#))

II. You must offer education that is “at least commensurate with the standards prescribed for the public schools.” ([People v. Levisen](#))

2. What materials, resources, recommendations or other help can ISBE provide?

The Illinois State Board of Education does not provide recommendations for materials or provide assistance with planning a home school curriculum. However, we have prepared a list of resources that may be helpful to view, if parents or guardians are unsure where to start.

[Please click here for the list of home school resources.](#)

3. Is there an application or registration process that must be completed before I start home schooling?

No. The state of Illinois **does not** require parents to register before they begin home schooling. The state does offer a voluntary registration process, which parents are encouraged to complete by filling out the following [ISBE Home Schooling Registration Form](#). Please note that ISBE does not provide confirmation or issue letters of registration for parents who choose to complete the voluntary registration form.

Parents or guardians are encouraged to send the same form to their Regional Office of Education. You can find your Regional Office of Education by searching for your county on the [Regional Office of Education Directory](#).

4. My child is currently attending a public school. Is there a formal procedure I must follow to withdraw before I begin to home school?

While there is no formal procedure mandated by state law, parents or guardians should notify the public school of their intent to home school. Failure to do so may result in the public school marking the student absent and eventually referring the student to a truancy officer.

ISBE highly recommends that you give the public school a dated letter (keeping copies for your records) that states you will be withdrawing your student and intend to home school. We also recommend including a copy of the [ISBE Home Schooling Registration Form](#) (please see #2) along with your letter to show that you are aware of your obligations as a parent.

In addition to the public school, parents or guardians are encouraged to send the same letter and form to their Regional Office of Education. You can find your Regional Office of Education by searching for your County on the [Regional Office of Education Directory](#).

5. Does my child have to take standardized tests?

No. If you choose to administer tests to assess academic progress you are not required to submit the results to any school official or state agency.

If you wish to administer a private test there are some options you may want to consider:

- [The Iowa Test of Basic Skills](#)
- [The Stanford Achievement Test \(Stanford 10\)](#)
- [The California Achievement Test](#)
- [Other Tests](#)

6. Eventually, I want to send my child back to public school. What should I know?

If you decide to re-enroll the student in public school after a period of home schooling, the public school enrolling the student will make a determination of grade placement. The school may administer a test to the student or ask for proof of the material covered during the period of home schooling. ISBE highly recommends that parents keep in close communication with the public district in which they intend to enroll or re-enroll the student. By doing so, you can ensure that your child will be ready for whatever assessment will be used and therefore placed in the grade level that matches the student's academic ability. Moreover, for high school students entering a public school it is critical that parents can demonstrate proof that a student has earned credits during the home school process for classes required for graduation.

Finally, parents or guardians should know their rights in grade placement. A 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 contemporary testing) that treats all students in the same way whether entering from nonpublic schools in Illinois or from public and nonpublic schools in other states would be a reasonable policy for a district to adopt.

7. Do I need to submit my student's work to the public school or to ISBE?

Typically, no. There are three situations in which you might be asked to show proof of the work your child has done.

- A.) You have been accused of not meeting the requirements listed in Question #1. In this case, a truancy officer may contact you and investigate your home school program.
- B.) You are enrolling your child in public school and need to demonstrate your child's academic level.
- C.) It may be helpful to have student records when applying for a college or university.

Outside of the above situations, you are not required to submit tests, homework, projects, grades, or any other materials to a school, district, or to ISBE.

8. May a home-schooled student take assessment tests such as the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, PSAT, SAT, etc. at nearby public schools?

No. Achievement tests such as Illinois Assessment of Readiness are a diagnostic tool for measuring the quality of public education in Illinois as it relates to the learning standards set by the Illinois State Board of Education. Private schools/home schools may not follow the same learning standards, and therefore PARCC would not be an accurate measure of academic achievement for these students.

For the PSAT 8/9, PSAT 10, and SAT, the Illinois State Board of Education has contracted with College Board for the purposes of administering these tests as the state's accountability assessments. Home school students are not covered by ISBE's contract, as they are not considered to be public school students. The College Board reserves the dates of administration for schools established under that contract, and the eligible students/grade levels served at those schools. The College Board provides materials to schools for the administrations based on the number of students registered by the State. Schools do not have the ability to order additional material and register students outside of this registration process.

While home school students are not eligible to participate during the state contract administrations at established schools, there are several alternative options available for them to participate:

- Home school students may participate in PSAT 8/9 and PSAT 10 at schools that are not part of the state contract (e.g. private and religious schools) that order the tests online for an April administration.
- Since fall testing (PSAT 8/9: September 23, 2019-March 27, 2020; PSAT/NMSQT: October 16, 2019, SAT School Day: October 16, 2019) is not a part of the state contract, home school students are able to participate in testing at their local public school, provided the school is willing to host the student and has enough personnel resources.
- Home school students are able to register for a national administration of the SAT on a Saturday.

Lastly, students are able to create an account on Khan Academy and use the Official SAT Practice platform to prepare for the SAT. There are 8 full-length practice tests on satpractice.org. There are two full-length PSAT 10 practice tests on The College Board's website as well which include scoring keys and answer explanations: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/practice/full-length-practice-tests>

9. May a home-schooled student take AP exams at a nearby public school?

Possibly. Public school districts are under no obligation to order and administer AP exams for home-schooled students. However, some public schools may still be willing to administer the exam. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to reach out to nearby AP Coordinators to find a school willing to administer the test. Please also keep the following points in mind:

1. Parents or guardians of home-schooled children cannot order their own AP exams independently through College Board. You must secure testing arrangements through an AP Coordinator.
2. Not all AP Coordinators are associated with public schools, which means testing sites may be available at private, or parochial schools.
3. **The deadline for ordering AP exams will be changing in the 2019-2020 year, which will require home-school students to submit their requests to AP Coordinators no later than November 15th.**
 - a. By no later than October 1, students should contact AP Services for Students (888-225-5427 or apstudents@info.collegeboard.org) to get the names and phone numbers of local AP coordinators who have indicated a willingness to test outside students.
 - i. The preferred order date for exams is October 4. Your AP Coordinator may order before or after this date so you are encouraged to reach out as soon as possible.
 - b. By no later than November 1, students should contact those AP coordinators to inquire about testing at the coordinator's school.
 - i. The final date to order tests is November 15th. Your AP Coordinator may order before this deadline so you are encouraged to reach out as soon as possible.
 - c. If the school agrees to administer exams to your child:
 - i. Ask when and where the exam will be administered.
 - ii. Let the coordinator know if your child will need special testing accommodations.
4. Please see [this handout from College Board](#) for pricing, fees, and deadlines.
5. Home-schooled students are not currently eligible to participate in [AP Capstone](#).

For more information, please see the following links:

- [AP Homeschool Resources](#)
- [AP Course Audit for Homeschool Providers](#)
- [AP Course User Guide \(PDF\)](#)
- [AP Exam Registration](#)
- [College Planning for Homeschoolers](#)

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

No. The State of Illinois does not provide financial assistance to parents seeking to home school nor are we aware of any other organizations providing this type of funding.

11. Who else can I contact for help with home schooling?

If you are seeking additional help with home schooling, there are some other options for you to explore:

- Contact your [Regional Office of Education](#). Many home school groups are locally organized, and your Regional Office of Education may know of nearby groups to help.
- Contact your local library and ask if they have home school resources or programs. Also ask about the names of any home school groups in the area.
- The following organizations may have useful information*:
 - [Coalition for Responsible Home Education](#)
 - [Chicago Home School Network](#)
 - [National Home School Association](#)
 - [National Black Home Educators](#)

*The opinions and views of the above organizations do not necessarily reflect those of the Illinois State Board of Education.

12. Can 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):

- The request was made by May 1st of the **previous** school year.
- There is enough space available in the school
- The public school is located in the district where the student lives
- The course or courses you have request are part of the school's regular curriculum

(Special education is covered in #16)

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

Yes. Illinois school law requires that school districts teaching grades 9 through 12 shall provide the classroom course and driving portion of driver's education to eligible home-schooled students in the district. A student is eligible under the following conditions set forth in the School Code (Sections 27-24.2 and 27-24.4):

- The parent or guardian of the home-schooled student must notify the local public district by April 1st of the name of the home-schooled student who wishes to take the driver's education course during the next school year.
- The parent or guardian of the home-schooled student 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.

14. May a home-schooled student participate in extracurricular activities or interscholastic athletics through the student's district of residence?

In general, no. Public schools have no obligation to make extracurricular activities, including athletics, open to students being home-schooled. There is, however, one exception in the case of a student attending a public-school part time who is enrolled in a course that **requires** an extracurricular component. For example, a home-schooled student enrolled in Band at a local public school would be allowed to attend Band practice after school **if after school practice was a required part of the course.**

Regarding athletics, 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.

- [Illinois Elementary School Association](#) (Section 2.034)
- [Illinois High School Association](#)

15. 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?

One important point to keep in mind in the case of a student placed in a private school, which includes home schooling by the parents: the services the student will receive in the private school/home-school will often be less than the services the student would receive if the student were attending a public school with an IEP. This is because, under Federal law, districts are only required to spend a portion of their Federal special education funds on students with disabilities in private school. Called “proportionate share,” this sum is usually much smaller than the overall funding a district can spend on students with disabilities within the public schools. In addition, when proportionate share funds run out during the school year, a district can choose to end services for the rest of the school year.

Unlike students in public schools, students with disabilities in private schools/home schooling are not entitled to an IEP. Instead, districts will often provide an Individual Services Plan or “ISP” to students with disabilities who will be receiving services from the school district during the school year. An ISP is a much less detailed document that often will only describe the types of service being provided, the frequency of the services, and the location where those services will be provided. If appropriate, the district might also add a goal or short-term objective, but this is not required in all cases.

To find out what kinds of service a school district will be providing to private school /home school students, a parent should contact the administrative offices of the district where the private school is located. District administration will be able to provide parents with an outline of the services, as well as information on how to contact the district about the Child Find and Evaluation process.

In addition, the district may periodically invite parents to attend a meeting called “Timely and Meaningful Consultation,” sometimes simply called “TMC.” Such a meeting is required to take place in every district in which a private school/home school student is located throughout Illinois. The meeting is typically held annually (although districts can conduct them more frequently if districts choose or if circumstances might require an additional meeting). TMC meetings must, under Federal rules, involve representatives of the private schools/home school as well as “parent representatives” of private school parents and students. These meetings will typically outline the amount of “proportionate share” funding the district has for the school year, as well as the types of service the district plans on providing during the year.

Parents of private school/home schooled students have limited grounds to file complaints with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) or to request a due process hearing. If a parent of a private school/home schooled student wishes to file a complaint, Federal rules state that the parent is limited to filing a complaint regarding the district’s conduct of the “Timely and Meaningful Consultation”

process described in the previous subsection. Federal rules also limit the grounds on which parents can file for due process. Under these rules, parents may only file for due process to challenge a district's decision either to find (or not find) a student eligible for special education services *of any kind* (see sidebar, "Important Reminder" for more information). Please see [Parent Guide - Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois](#) for detailed information regarding special education in Illinois.

16. May a home-schooled student 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 students.

17. My home-schooled student is **completing** the equivalent of 8th/12th grade. Is the student entitled to receive an 8th/12th grade diploma from their local public school and/or take part in the graduation program?

No. Since your student is being home-schooled, the student has no legal right to participate in public school graduation ceremonies or receive a diploma. A student must be enrolled full time at a public district and satisfy all graduation requirements to be eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies and receive a diploma.

18. 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.

19. How do I know when my student is ready to graduate or move to the next grade level?

As the administrator of your home school, you will have to make this decision. ISBE does not provide guidance or recommendations for instructing and evaluating students in home school programs.

You should be aware that while you do have freedom to decide grade level progression and graduation requirements, employers, the military, vocational and trade schools, colleges and universities may have course requirements. We encourage you to design your home school curriculum to meet the requirements of the employer, school, or organization that you will be applying to after graduation.

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

Many colleges or universities have procedures for admitting home-schooled students and for assessing their background. Please see the following links for more information:

- [University of Illinois Home School FAQ](#)
- [US News: How Home Schooling Affects College Admissions](#)
- [Khan Academy: What's different about applying to college as a homeschooler?](#)
- [How to Obtain a Home School Transcript](#)
- [Creating a Home School Transcript](#)