

# Preparing for Your Homeschool Evaluation



*\* This is a living document and is subject to change as laws or policies are updated. If you have a paper or PDF copy of this document, please check the newest version at [bit.ly/PreparingForYourEvaluation](https://bit.ly/PreparingForYourEvaluation)*

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# Homeschool Portfolio Requirements

*\*\*Please let me know if you notice any broken links.\*\**

Click Here for the [Quick Checklist](#) or Here for the [FAQs](#)

This document contains detailed explanations of each PA homeschool requirement from kindergarten through graduation. Do not let the length of the document intimidate you. It is meant to be as exhaustive as possible so you aren't left searching all over the place for answers.

**Note:** Pennsylvania does require the child to be present for an interview during the evaluation. However, they do not need to stay for the entire discussion. The evaluation is meant to be a relaxed and even fun conversation about the student's learning, not an interrogation. 😊

## Portfolio Samples

Include 2-3 samples for each required subject, usually one from the beginning, middle, and end of the year.

*\*Feel free to bring entire workbooks if that is more convenient than pulling out pages. Samples can include things like copy work, worksheets, artwork or pictures of artwork, projects, science experiments (photos or reports), math problems/tests, creative writing samples, other activities, and anything else you feel represents your child's learning/schooling that year.*

## Partial Year Samples

When homeschooling after beginning the year with another form of schooling, you can (and should) use samples of classwork from the beginning of the year for samples in the homeschool portfolio. The goal is to establish a baseline so we can see progress made.

## Required Subjects

### Elementary Subjects – Grades 1-6

At the elementary school level, the following courses shall be taught:

- English**, to include spelling, reading & writing
- Arithmetic**
- Science**
- Social studies**, to include geography; history of the U.S. & Pennsylvania; civics
- Safety education**, including regular & continuous instruction in the dangers & prevention of fires
- Health & physiology**
- Physical education**
- Music**
- Art**

## Secondary Subjects – Grades 7-12

At the secondary school level, the following courses shall be taught:

- English**, to include language, literature, speech & composition
- Science** (i.e. biology; chemistry)
- Social studies**, to include civics, geography, world history, history of the U.S. & PA - *economics is also recommended*
- Math**, to include general math, algebra & geometry- *trig. is also recommended*
- Art**
- Music**
- Physical education/health/safety education**, including regular & continuous instruction in the dangers & prevention of fires
- Foreign language is recommended but not required*

### Combining Subjects

Oftentimes, several subjects are combined in one, especially at the elementary level. For instance, social studies, history, civics, geography, etc. are often within one curriculum and spelling, reading, and writing usually fall within English or Language Arts. Things like PE, health, first aid, and fire safety are often wrapped up together as well. Art and music can often be incorporated into Language Arts and History classes. So, each subject doesn't need to be an entirely separate class. There just needs to be evidence of covering each subject in some way.

### Every Subject Does Not Need Covered Everyday

Another consideration is that you don't need to cover every subject every day. Even in public school, every subject is not covered daily. For instance, "specials" like music, art, and PE (including health and safety) are usually only covered once per week, not daily. Some people opt to cover music once or twice per week for half the year and then art in the same fashion for the other half of the year. Others incorporate these into other subjects and don't have a standalone curriculum for these subjects. Once at the secondary level, only two years of "Arts and Humanities" are required. (This could include foreign language, any kind of art or music class, dance, theatre, philosophy, etc. Think of it as anything relating to culture or an aspect of culture.) If your child takes any kind of music or dance lessons or plays a sport, these things fulfill the requirement for the corresponding subject.

At the elementary level (K-6), it is completely acceptable to cover science for half the year and social studies for half the year or to alternate days for these subjects. (This is what is done in many elementary schools.) The only subjects I would encourage you to teach all year at least 4 days per week would be reading and math; however, I think it is completely acceptable, once your child is a fluent reader, to incorporate your reading lessons into other subjects like history, science, or even Bible (after all, they need something to read *about* anyway - might as well get two birds with one stone.)

## Reading Log

This is simply a list of texts used during the year and books the student read independently or had read to him or her. There's no minimum limit for the reading log, but for younger kids, I usually see 30+ books which amounts to 1-2 books read per week. That number might be lower for an older student who is reading chapter books or for a student rereading the same books multiple times. On the reading log, you can include the title of the text and the author or publisher if there's no specific author (which is common with textbooks).

**Audiobooks:** Audiobooks may be included, but typically I would expect that at least some books are read visually unless the student has a visual impairment or other significant reading disability. Additionally, some diploma programs only count audiobooks if the student visually read along except in cases of disability.

You can use this [Reading Log Template](#) if you would like, or you can document whichever way you'd like.

## Standardized Assessment Results

**For 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade only - the results of nationally normed standardized assessments.**

Note: the scores do not need to be "passing" scores, and the tests do not have to be for their registered grade level. For instance, a student may take standardized tests during 3rd grade, but the test might be on a 1st or 5th or any grade level to correlate with the student's academic level rather than age. I recommend the [California Achievement Test](#). If you are in a hurry for results, have the test completed online. They also have a mail-in option. \*\*Tests are generally taken at the *end* of the required school year. \*\* [See more information on standardized tests here.](#)

## Hours and Days

### *What Counts as a Homeschool "Day"?*

Elementary students are required to have at least 900 hours OR 180 days of schooling, while secondary (7-12 grades) are required 990 hours OR 180 days. Most people record days rather than hours. There is no well defined legal definition of a "day", so you get to decide what you count as a day for recording purposes. People have successfully won court cases in PA by arguing that learning happens every day, so every day can count as a school day. Because of this, I don't require additional documentation on specific dates or hours during evaluations. Your statement that you met this requirement is enough.

You can officially begin counting days for a given school year as early as July 1. However, you need to have your [Start of the Year](#) documents submitted before days can be counted.

Here is a simple [Attendance Sheet](#) for tracking days if you would like to for your records. However, I do not require this during evaluations.

## Other Information

### Evaluation Deadline

The deadline to submit your evaluation form to your superintendent or umbrella school is **June 30**. (However, [if you do not submit it on time](#), they will simply call you or send you a letter requesting it before taking any further action. So, don't panic if you are running a bit late.)

### Student Must Attend

The **\*student should be present\*** during the evaluation. (A student interview is required under PA homeschool law, but I try to make the children as comfortable as possible and keep the conversation low stress.)

### Fee

There is a **\$40 fee per student for the evaluation and \$25 for each sibling**. After the evaluation, I will send you the evaluation form for you to print along with my PayPal link, Zelle, Apple Pay, or Venmo information for you to send payment. (You can choose the method you prefer.)

### Scheduling

I begin scheduling evaluations in mid-April. I conduct evaluations throughout May and June. I will send an email with a [Google Booking link](#) in late March/early April to a list of families I've connected with before. If you don't see the email at that time, please feel free to reach out or simply use the link provided here.

\*\*You do not need to be completely finished with your instruction for the homeschool year to complete your evaluation. Though the evaluation should happen *near* the end of your school year. Usually this falls around mid-April through June.

### Students with IEPs

If your child had an IEP before beginning homeschooling, you will either need to work with the district to have the IEP canceled/revoked OR you will need to get your beginning of the year objectives approved before you register each year. I can help you come up with objectives if you would like and can approve them. (I do this for free because I don't think it should be harder or more expensive for families to homeschool their children who have special needs.) [See more information here](#).

## Graduation Requirements / Diploma Options

***7th grade is the time to start seriously considering your child's graduation path.***

Some families like the recognition of an organization-issued diploma. These include the Pennsylvania Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency (PHAA), the Erie County Homeschoolers Diploma Association (ECHA), and others. Each organization has their own requirements and generally requires families to obtain evaluations from that organization's pre-approved evaluators. If you intend to have your child obtain an organization-issued diploma, be sure to familiarize yourself with their requirements by the time your child starts 9th grade since some of the organizations have cut-off dates for enrolling in their program.

*A parent-issued diploma is just as valid as those issued by an organization. Students with parent-issued diplomas access the same college, scholarship (except organization-specific), and employment opportunities as those with an organization-issued diploma.*

**\*\*Note:** The Pennsylvania Department of Education does not directly issue diplomas to homeschoolers. Instead, it recognizes and approves organizations that provide diploma programs.

### **Pennsylvania Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency ([PHAA](#)):**

- PHAA is a state-wide organization that provides diploma programs, resources, online courses, and evaluation services for home-educated students.
- PHAA requires students to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, and public speaking, and their transcripts are often accompanied by narrative evaluation letters from evaluators.
- These evaluation letters provide a comprehensive picture of the student's academic achievements and can serve as recommendation letters for college or employment.

### **Erie County Homeschoolers Diploma Association ([ECHA](#)):**

- ECHA is another state-recognized option for Pennsylvania homeschoolers seeking a diploma.
- It is also recognized as an inclusive organization, meaning it serves students from diverse backgrounds and educational philosophies.
- ECHA has less rigorous standards which align more closely with PA homeschool law, however, their standards are still more rigorous than most public schools.

### **Other Diploma Options:**

Other organizations such as [Aleithia Learning Community](#), [Susquehanna Valley Homeschool Diploma Programs, Inc.](#), [Bridgeway Academy](#), and [Mason Dixon Homeschool Association Diploma Program](#) also offer diploma programs within Pennsylvania.

### **GED or Post-Secondary:**

In addition to these, students can also obtain a Commonwealth Secondary Diploma by passing the [GED test](#) or completing a year of postsecondary education. Something to consider is that many employers and colleges may view a GED as the student not completing high school coursework. If they did in fact complete all required coursework, it is preferable to issue them a diploma.

## Parent Issued Diploma:

- A change in the home education law in October 2014 established this as a state-recognized option for diplomas.
- Some homeschoolers feel strongly that a parent-issued diploma is sufficient and therefore reject the idea of organization-issued diplomas.
- To be a valid, state-recognized diploma, a supervisor-issued diploma must meet specific criteria:
  - The student must have completed all of the graduation requirements of the home education law while in compliance with the program.
    - English: Four years.
    - Mathematics: Three years.
    - Science: Three years.
    - Social Studies: Three years.
    - Arts and Humanities: Two years. (Two years of a foreign language is often preferred by colleges, but PA requires art & music to be covered - this can be a half year for each of those plus another year of something else or one year of each to fulfill this requirement.)
  - At the secondary level (grades 7-12), the law specifies sub-subjects within the broader categories which need to be covered *at some point* (not every year) between grades 7-12. These include:
    - Language & Literature
    - Speech
    - Composition
    - General Mathematics
    - Algebra I
    - Geometry
    - Civics
    - World History
    - History of the United States & Pennsylvania History
  - Furthermore, within grades 7-12, specific subjects that "shall be taught" at some point include:
    - Science (any science is acceptable - colleges like to see biology and chemistry)
    - Geography (This can be incorporated into history)
    - Art & Music (Could be a half year or full year for each)
    - Physical Education
    - Health & Safety Education (including fire prevention).

For this reason, ***it is recommended to keep transcripts beginning in 7th grade*** if you don't plan to cover all of these courses within grades 9-12.

- The diploma must be on a [standardized form](#) developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).
- ***The diploma must be signed by the student's 12th-grade evaluator, confirming the student's suitability for graduation based on their portfolio and completion of required courses.***

- A supervisor-issued diploma, when complying with the requirements, carries the **same rights and privileges** as one issued by the state or a diploma program. This means it's generally accepted for college applications, employment, and other purposes. The HSLDA does a great job defending these rights if any issues do come up.
- **Documentation is Key:** The diploma itself is often less important than the comprehensive documentation backing it up. Parents should meticulously maintain transcripts, portfolios, course descriptions, and other records to validate the education received starting in 7th grade (recommended), and at least no later than 9th grade.
- **Transcripts:** The Homeschool Mom has a great [Transcript Template](#) for homeschoolers.
- **12th Grade Evaluations/Diplomas:** The 12th grade evaluation is more in depth than other years. For me to sign off on a diploma, I need to see evidence that all the required subjects were completed. This generally means bringing transcripts (parent-created or from a school) OR portfolio samples for each of the [required secondary subjects](#) (can start as early as 7th grade).

# Evaluation Prep Checklist

- Pennsylvania requires the child to be present during the evaluation (*but they don't need to stay the entire time*).
- [Samples](#) from each [required subject](#) to show progress over the course of the year
  - Samples can include things such as worksheets or workbook pages, projects, pictures of projects or activities, ticket stubs for performances or events, writing assignments, video clips, or anything else used to demonstrate progress in a subject.
- [Reading Log](#)
- The results of nationally normed [Standardized Assessments](#) - *For 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade only*
- Fee: \$40 for the first child and \$25 for each sibling (Payable via Paypal or Zelle)
- Optional*: A list of any questions you have for me

**\*\*12th Grade Evaluations\*\*** If you are seeking a 12th grade evaluation and diploma signature, please bring transcripts and course descriptions OR portfolio samples for all required subjects for the secondary level. (Credits begin to count towards graduation in 7th grade).

The **portfolio** is simply a culmination of the samples, reading log, and assessment results. This can be in the form of a binder or digital format such as a Google Drive folder or a slideshow presentation (a digital format makes it easier to save over the years and easier to send to your evaluator, prospective colleges, or anyone else who might need to see). Some families simply show me a variety of pages from their workbooks.

It's a good idea to save a copy of your evaluation form each year. Many families simply add this to their portfolios.

## Start of the Year Forms

Each year, families homeschooling under the general homeschool law must submit to their superintendent or umbrella school the following forms at the *beginning* of each school year. **The deadline for submission of beginning of the year paperwork is August 1st for returning homeschoolers or “before you begin homeschooling” if it is your first year.** Many returning homeschoolers submit this paperwork along with their end of the year evaluation to simplify things. **You can start counting days as early as July 1st** as long as your paperwork is turned in.

*\*\*Download PDFs to your files (rather than opening them in your browser) to make them fillable.*

- If your child is already enrolled in school, you may need to submit a [Withdraw Form](#) to your current school. The school may also have their own form they want you to sign.
- If your child currently has an active IEP, you may decide to revoke consent for the IEP. Here is a sample [Revocation of IEP](#) letter. (For more information on the pros and cons of keeping or revoking your child’s IEP, [see here.](#))
- An [Affidavit](#) (*needs to be notarized*) OR [Unsworn Declaration](#) (*does not need notarized*)
- [Elementary Level \(K-6\) Educational Objectives](#)
- [Secondary Level \(7-12\) Educational Objectives](#)
  - *These objectives can be used for general or special education. You may also customize these objectives or write your own if you’d like.*
  - Google will “force” a copy when you click on this link. You can print exactly what I have here and simply write in your child’s name, or you can make edits to customize the objectives to your liking.
  - Please note that objectives are not reviewed as part of your homeschool evaluation, so you are not required to meet these objectives, and you are allowed to change your objectives at any time without further documentation.
- **Special Education (IEP Students) Only:** Educational Objectives must be pre-approved for all students who have an active IEP.
- [Medical Services Report](#) and [Dental Report](#) (print these to take to your medical providers) OR an [Exemption Form](#) (*Exemptions only need to be submitted once. I often recommend utilizing an exemption form simply because it is easier than gathering medical and dental records every single year.*) \*Download the form to your files to make the form fillable.

# Additional Resources

**Note:** There are MANY excellent curriculums and resources for homeschoolers. More now than ever. Those listed below are those I have tried personally or plan to try based on the recommendation of others. You are always free to use any curriculum or resource you like. I only recommend these to give you a starting point because I know how overwhelming it can be to start off. Also, the majority of my recommendations are Christian-based because that is what we tend to use in our home.

I know not all homeschoolers want Christian-based curriculum. As far as non-religious curricula go, I have heard good things about [Time4Learning](#) though I have not used it personally. Time4Learning offers core subjects with potential for add-ons like languages. Subscriptions are month-to-month, allowing easy pauses or cancellations, and include access to subjects like Math, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies, plus electives in higher grades.

*\*\*Please keep in mind that it is not possible for me to thoroughly examine every single resource on an ongoing basis to ensure alignment with every family's beliefs. I encourage families to remain diligent in supervising the information their children are exposed to in order to ensure it is deemed appropriate for your educational goals.*

## Curriculums

### Complete Curriculum

- **[EasyPeasy All-in-One Homeschool](#):** This is a **free**, online all-in-one homeschool curriculum based on PA homeschool requirements. You could use the provided courses for all PA required subjects or pick at la carte courses to fill in the gaps. You can print PDFs for free. You also have an option to buy pre-printed workbooks for reading, language arts, math, and Bible. You can also make an online account to help you keep track of completed lessons.
- **[The Good and the Beautiful](#):** The Good and the Beautiful offers a variety of curriculums for all core subjects. Their literature curriculum incorporates geography. They are also in the process of adding additional elective courses, so stay tuned! Most of their curriculums include video lessons. They offer [free language arts and math curriculum for K-8](#)

### Learning to Read

- **Sing, Spell, Read, and Write:** This was our favorite curriculum for reading from K through 2nd grade. Unfortunately, the author sold it to Pearson (likely thinking it could then reach more people), then Pearson decided not to print it. The original author has been trying to reclaim printing rights, but hasn't been successful to date. Sometimes you can still find this curriculum or pieces of it on resale sites like eBay. It's a very extensive package, but if you can at least find the workbook and the leveled readers, those are the key components. The songs can be [found on YouTube](#). *(We were able to complete the program with just the workbooks and YouTube songs. Although the games and readers are helpful for practice, all the essential components are found in the workbooks.)*
  - [Kindergarten: All Aboard and On Track](#)
  - [1st Grade: Off We Go! and Raceway Book \(K/1 Combo Kit Components\)](#)
  - [2nd Grade: Grand Tour Book 1 and Grand Tour Book 2 \(Level 2 Storybook Readers\)](#)
- **[All About Reading \(AAR\)](#)** is a stand-alone, multi-sensory, research-based phonics curriculum created to help your child learn to read. You can start the program between preschool and kindergarten age and

use it until your child can read fluently, usually around second or third grade. We have not personally used this curriculum, but I recommend it since it is multi-sensory. It seems like it is non-religious.

## Writing, Spelling, and Handwriting

- **[WriteShop](#)**: Parent involvement is higher but pays off long-term. Lots of hands-on activities to teach writing skills.
- **[Spelling You See](#)** by Demme Learning: A phonics and visual memory-based spelling program with levels A-G (approximately grades K-6). This program teaches the concept of spelling rather than having children simply memorize spelling words. We found that this program also made our kids stronger readers.
- **[PenTime Handwriting Series](#)**: Cursive in particular has been shown to help kids develop visual tracking skills which improves overall reading. PenTime cursive goes up to level 8.

## History and Literature (These curriculums combine history and literature.)

- **[Notgrass History](#)**: Family-style, Christian history curriculum for grades 1–12 that includes literature, hands-on projects, art, and music.
- **[Mystery of History](#)**: History curriculum—written from a biblical worldview—to guide students through a meaningful, engaging, and historically accurate journey from ancient times to modern.

## Math K-8

- **[Simply Good and Beautiful Math](#)**: Colorful and engaging spiral-review style math curriculum with video lessons. Free PDF downloads for K-8 or buy inexpensive workbooks. *(I find it more practical to buy the workbooks since printer ink is expensive, but I access the answer book online. You could also access the mental math portion online, but they do have a sticker grid to encourage completion and teach grid skills.)*

## Math 9-12

- **Saxon Math**: I recommend Saxon for high school level math. I haven't used it personally yet, but it is highly recommended by those at our co-op due to the availability of [video lessons](#). They also have "[My Math Assistant](#)" which is a paid companion website offering videos and self-grading. Saxon's Algebra 1 and 2 levels together cover geometry as well, which is great for students who are behind and don't have time for a full year dedicated just to geometry or students who want to move on to advanced math before graduation.

## Math K-12

- **[Math-U-See](#)**: The Math-U-See Curriculum is a complete and comprehensive, visual, mastery-based K–12 math curriculum. Each level concentrates on a specific set of skills, while continuously reviewing and integrating topics and concepts presented in previous levels. By using tools such as videos, manipulatives, and other resources, the Math-U-See Curriculum is designed to appeal to all types of learners in a variety of learning environments. They offer all the way up to calculus.

## Science

- **[Science Shepherd](#)**: Christian-based science curriculum with video instruction and workbook-based activities. This is a good option if your goal is to create independence for your student(s) since these lessons can be completed without a lot of hand-holding from parents.

- **Apologia:** Apologia is written from a Biblical perspective, with a conversational tone, and hands-on learning. This generally requires more parent involvement because lessons are not laid out as simply, so parents will need to guide their children a bit more through this. However, it is still a very comprehensive curriculum.
- **The Good and the Beautiful** also offers science curriculums which are easier for students to navigate on their own. (Of course, kids will always need supervision for labs.)

## Other Resources

### Homeschool Law

- **Ask Pauline:** This website is no longer updated, but it is still a great resource for homeschool law.
- **HSLDA:** The Home School Legal Defense Association advocates for homeschooling families. They also offer membership scholarships and curriculum grants for those with financial need.

### Evaluation Preparation

- Printable: **Preparing for Your Evaluation**
- Digital Portfolio Template (*in progress*)
- **Beginning of the Year Forms**
- **Homeschool Transcript Template:** I recommend keeping a transcript beginning in 7th grade since some state required sub-subjects can count towards graduation requirements. However, the number of years for each subject still must be completed within grades 9-12. For instance, if you cover world history in 7th grade, you don't need to cover it again in high school, but you still need three years of social studies at the high school level. This might look something like covering World History in 7th grade, US and state History in 8th grade, Economics in 9th grade, Government/Civics in 10th grade, and History of Film or European History in 11th grade. This allows to to cover additional topics beyond what is normally covered (i.e. Economics, History of Film, and European History are not standard courses in PA, but they might be of special interest to you or your child(ren).)

### Bible

- **The Bible Project:** The Bible Project produces biblically accurate (not denomination-specific) summary videos for each book of the Bible and additional biblical concepts. They now also have round-table style courses available. All for free.
- **Answers in Genesis:** Answers for everyday.
- **Apologetics Press:** Excellent resource for middle and high school students. They cover many topics including those that help children make sense of the tension between what the world teaches and what the Bible teaches.
- **Greenleaf Guide to Old Testament History:** The readings in this book take you through the history of Israel from Genesis to Nehemiah, chronologically. The Old Testament's history of Israel is divided into 180 Bible readings (approximately 1-2 chapters each). For each reading there is a series of questions to help you focus on the significant details. There are also background notes, and suggestions on how to cover the material and keep it interesting. The book is intended as a first history course for the early elementary grades, though many parents are using it with high school students.

## Reading

- **[SnapWords \(K-4\)](#)**: Great for early or struggling readers who benefit from visual and kinesthetic learning strategies. These are flashcards with evidence-based sight words, but with pictures drawn into each word and an action sentence on the back with a motion to go with the word.
- **[Starfall \(K-5\)](#)**: Starfall was founded by Dr. Stephen Schutz, who had difficulty learning to read as a child due to dyslexia. He was motivated to create a learning platform with untimed, multisensory interactive games that allow children to see, hear, and touch as they learn. Starfall was developed in the classroom by teachers and opened in August 2002 as a free public service to teach children to read. Since then it has expanded to include standards in language arts and mathematics for preschool through fifth grade and above.
- **[ReadWorks \(K-12\)](#)**: This free resource provides high quality literacy resources including paired texts and question sets. This is a great place to search for reading passages based on level and interests. Many texts also have audio options. Spanish-texts are available as well.

## Math

- **[Musical Multiplication App](#)**: This got my kids to memorize their multiplication facts through songs and gamification. (By The Good and The Beautiful). Each profile has a practice and mastery section as well as songs for each multiplication fact. Create up to six profiles per account.
- 
- **[Math Worksheet Generator](#)**: This is a fun resource to easily create worksheets for extra practice.
- **[AIM](#)**: The AIM programs by Demme Learning provide a solution for students who are struggling with foundational math skills. This is a great supplemental program for kids struggling with addition & subtraction or multiplication.

## Marriage (*for parents*)

- **[Marriage Workshop](#)**: Short Christian workshop for strengthening marriages. Your kids learn better when you are a united front.

## College Prep

- **[Saylor Academy](#)**: Offers free college courses that are eligible to transfer to their [Degree Completion Partners](#) (including [Penn State World Campus](#)).
- **[OpenStax](#)**: Free digital textbooks.
- **[PSAT & SAT Prep Resources](#)**: Free resources.
- **[PSAT & SAT Sign Up](#)**: Homeschooled who plan to take PSAT/NMSQT at a school they don't normally attend are considered away students. They won't automatically be included in the registration file the school completes and will need to reach out to participating schools or district offices at least four weeks before the testing window begins to be included. (Check the administering school district website for applicable deadlines. Some districts may need this step completed earlier.)

## Grants for Homeschool Curriculum

- **[CHAP Foundation](#)**: This Pennsylvania-based nonprofit offers assistance to homeschool families "in need." Their support could cover costs associated with beginning homeschooling, unexpected expenses, or special needs. They are open to requests for aid.
- **[Home School Legal Defense Association \(HSLDA\) Compassion Grants](#)**: These grants may be used toward curriculum materials, tuition for co-ops or classes, testing fees, and other

education-related costs. Many curriculum providers also offer significant discounts for those who are given a Compassion Grant. There are specific application windows for the HSLDA grants. They also offer disaster relief and need-based memberships.

## Scholarships & Grants for College

- **FAFSA/Pell Grant:** Income-based grant. Even if you don't think you'll qualify, apply anyway since many colleges and loans require it.
- [Sonlight College Scholarships for Homeschoolers](#)
- [HERO \(Home Education Recognition Organization\) Scholarships](#)
- [Regent University Homeschool Scholarship](#)
- [Study.com College Scholarship for Homeschool Students](#)
- [General third-party / merit-based scholarships](#)
- **College-based Scholarships:** Many colleges offer a variety of scholarships and financial aid. Inquire with your college of choice to learn about current options.

*\*\*I do not receive any compensation for recommending these resources. These are simply resources and curriculums we have used and enjoyed or plan to use based on others' recommendations or personal research. You are always free to use any curriculum, resource, or method you prefer.\*\**

# FAQs

## Getting Started: How do I get started with homeschooling?

Starting to homeschool, whether at the beginning of the school year or partway through, is completely doable, and Pennsylvania has a clear legal process for getting started.

First, know that you do not need your district's approval to begin homeschooling. You may begin homeschooling immediately. You must have your beginning of the year *documentation submitted within ten (10) days of beginning homeschooling*.

### **If you're starting at the beginning of the school year (before August 1):**

You'll need to submit your [Start of the Year Forms](#) to your school district's superintendent. These include:

- A notarized affidavit (or a signed unsworn declaration)
- A list of educational objectives
  - If your child has an IEP, your objectives need to be pre-approved. (*I do this for free.*)
- A Medical Services and Dental record including immunizations or exemption statement

These must be submitted **by August 1**.

You can find a checklist and template here: [Beginning of the Year Forms](#)

The affidavit or unsworn declaration, objectives, and medical information must be submitted yearly. The exemption statement only needs to be submitted once. (*For this reason, I recommend submitting an exemption statement simply because it will be one less thing to track down every year.*)

### **If you're starting mid-year (after the school year has begun):**

That's perfectly fine! Many families switch to homeschooling mid-year for a variety of reasons. You'll follow the same steps:

- Notify the school by submitting the affidavit, objectives, and immunization record/exemption (See [Start of the Year Forms](#))
  - If your child has an IEP, your objectives need to be pre-approved. (*I do this for free.*)
  - Alternatively, you may choose to [revoke your child's IEP](#). See here for [pros and cons of revoking an IEP](#).
- [Withdraw](#) your child from school (this may include notifying the registrar or principal)
- [Begin keeping a portfolio](#) of your child's work from the date you start homeschooling
- Save some samples of work your child completed at their previous school to include in their portfolio.

## Which Counties: In which counties or districts do you conduct evaluations?

All PA counties! Since I conduct all evaluations virtually, I am able to conduct evaluations statewide.

## Late Evaluations: What happens if I turn in my evaluation after June 30?

If you turn in your evaluation after the deadline, you are legally considered out of compliance and truant. However, realistically, what will likely happen is your district will try to call you to let you know they need your evaluation. If you still do not submit it, they can send you a certified letter stating that you have 10 days to submit your evaluation. If you still don't submit it, they usually send someone to your house to ask in-person. After that, they can officially charge you with truancy at which point you will have a court hearing. Generally, if you submit your evaluation and/or bring a copy to court, truancy charges are dropped. But if you come to court and still do not have your evaluation, they are likely to give you a certain amount of time to obtain your evaluation. If, after that time, you still have not submitted an evaluation, they can give you a fine and potentially ban you from homeschooling for up to 12 months (meaning the child must be promptly enrolled in a public, private, or charter school.) They can also order community service, parenting classes, or even up to 3 days in jail if they hold a special hearing and determine that the truancy was willful. Students over the age of 13 may face legal consequences as well including fines, license suspension, and as a last resort, removal from the home.

As we can see, the consequences can be severe. But for families that are truly homeschooling, it is unlikely to ever get to those severe levels. In other words, if you are a couple days late, you're not going to have CYS showing up without warning to take your kids or police dragging you off to jail. There will be many communications prior to real consequences. It's not uncommon for people to miss the deadline and be contacted by their district. As long as you keep communication open with the district about when you will submit your evaluation, it should not be escalated further.

## Qualifications: What qualifies you to evaluate homeschool programs, and who can you evaluate?

Under Pennsylvania law, homeschool evaluators must have at least *two years of experience teaching the appropriate grade level* and meet specific requirements for evaluating students with special needs. *I meet all legal qualifications to evaluate students in grades K–12, including those with active IEPs.*

I have:

- Full-time classroom experience teaching at the elementary level and high school special education students (covering all core subjects) as well as 7 years of experience tutoring high school students with various needs.
- A **valid PA PK-4 (elementary) certification and PK-12 special education certification**

This allows me to evaluate **all grade levels** - from elementary through high school, including students with learning differences, students with IEPs, nonverbal students, unschoolers, and those using non-traditional approaches. My goal is to ensure legal compliance while honoring each child's unique learning journey.

## The Evaluation: What does a homeschool evaluation look like?

I conduct all evaluations virtually through web conferencing (such as Google Meet). Simply click the meeting link at your appointment time to join (*you will get a meeting link in your confirmation email after you schedule your evaluation*).

A typical evaluation is a relaxed and encouraging conversation focused on your child's growth over the school year. I'll review the portfolio samples you provide (See the [Preparing for Your Evaluation](#) section), ask your child a few simple questions, and we'll discuss how the year went - celebrating progress and addressing any questions you have for me. Most evaluations last about **30-60 minutes per child**. *(If you have more than two children who need evaluations, please schedule additional appointments accordingly.)*

After the evaluation, I will email you the evaluation form with further instructions. You will need to submit it to your district superintendent or umbrella school. I recommend keeping a copy for your own records and saving it in your child's portfolio for that year.

### What to Bring: What kind of work should I bring to the evaluation?

Please bring samples from each subject your child studied: a few pages from workbooks, writing samples, photos of projects, etc; a reading log; the results of standardized assessments (for 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade evaluations only); and anything else that shows progress. The goal is to demonstrate consistent, sustained education throughout the year - not perfection. Please see the [Preparing for Your Evaluation](#) section for a complete list of what you need for the evaluation.

### Child's Attendance: Does my child need to attend the evaluation?

Yes. PA law requires a "student interview" during the evaluation. However, they do not need to stay for the entire duration.

### Student Interview: What questions are asked during the student interview?

The student portion is informal and tailored to their age. It might look something like:

1. Walk me through a typical day in your homeschool.
2. What is something you remember learning this year?
3. Which subject do you want to tell me about first?
4. Tell me about a book you read this year.
5. Describe a time when you were really interested in or excited about something you were learning or practicing.
6. What kinds of things have you been practicing or exploring?
7. What's a topic or subject you'd be happy to keep learning more about?

I encourage parents to review their child's portfolio with them before the evaluation and let the child know what to expect so they feel more comfortable talking about their year. They should look at this as an opportunity to show off all their (and your) hard work!

### Nonverbal Children - How can they be interviewed?

In Pennsylvania, homeschool evaluations must include a student interview, but this does not require the child to speak. For nonverbal students, the interview can take the form of observation, parent-facilitated interaction, or the use of AAC devices. I may watch the student engage with materials, respond through gestures or body language, or communicate with tools like tablets or communication boards. Parents can also share videos or explain how the child interacts and learns. The goal is simply to respectfully acknowledge the student as an active learner and document their progress - no verbal responses are necessary.

Please let me know ahead of time if your child is nonverbal so we can discuss how your child communicates before your evaluation. This will allow us to cater the interview to your child's abilities and preferences.

### My child is shy or nervous about the interview.

That's completely okay! Many kids (especially younger ones or first-timers) feel unsure about talking to someone new. I keep the student portion relaxed and friendly - more like a conversation than an interview. I'll ask gentle, open-ended questions and let your child share at their own pace. They're welcome to show me their work, tell a story, or even just nod or point if that's more comfortable.

There's no pressure to give perfect answers. I'm not testing your child. I'm simply getting a glimpse into how they spent their year learning and growing. Parents are encouraged to sit beside them during our conversation, and you can prepare together ahead of time so they feel more confident. Most kids end up enjoying it once they realize it's not a big deal!

### I'm nervous about the evaluation. What if we didn't do enough?

You're not alone. Many parents feel nervous the first time (or even the fifth!). Please know that I approach evaluations with encouragement, not judgment. My role is to help you meet the legal requirements while celebrating the progress your child made - not to quiz, criticize, or compare your family to anyone else. You don't need to have a perfect year, a polished portfolio, or check every box flawlessly. I'm looking for meaningful learning and growth that makes sense *for your child and family situation*. I'm on your team, and I'm here to make this process as stress-free as possible.

Remember, I'm a homeschooling mom too. Our family has gone through seasons that have made homeschooling difficult too: Job changes and financial stress, moving to a new house, pregnancy and having a baby, medical issues, the loss of pets, family drama, reluctant learners, learning challenges, car troubles, house repairs, you name it. I know it can seem like there's always something getting in the way

If you're unsure whether you've "done enough," we'll talk through it together. You're probably doing more than you think.

### How long do I need to save previous years' portfolios?

There is no official PA law on how long homeschool portfolios must be kept.

For grades K-6, I recommend saving 2-3 years worth of portfolios in case your homeschool program ever came under scrutiny for any reason.

For grades 7-12, I recommend keeping all of these at least until your child has their diploma. Although years 9-12 are the most important, some sub-subjects the state requires for graduation can count if learned in 7th or 8th grade.

*\*Remember, you don't need to keep everything you've ever done. Just the portfolio.*

## Do you have curriculum recommendations?

Absolutely! Please see our [Resources](#) section.

## Unschoolers: Do you evaluate unschoolers or those who homeschool without formal curriculums?

Yes! Your method of homeschooling is your choice. The law stipulates the required subjects but not *how* they are taught or the details you must include. Documentation might look a bit different compared to those who have a lot of workbook pages, but it can still be done. Samples might include things like pictures of projects, videos of presentations the student gave (even something like a clip of a piano recital or practicing an instrument or speech), any writing samples (including creative writing like poetry), drawings and other artwork, photos taken during activities or outings, certificates from or screenshots of digital games or apps, or even weekly summaries of learning activities written by the parent or child. It doesn't have to be exhaustive - just enough to show that learning happened consistently.

## Special Needs: Do you evaluate students with special needs?

Yes! In fact, students with special needs make up a significant portion of homeschooled students.

What the law says:

If a child has an IEP through their school district, the homeschool law requires that the evaluation be conducted by a licensed clinical or school psychologist or a PA-certified teacher with a valid special education certificate.

This only applies if the student currently has an IEP. If a parent submits a written [revocation of consent](#) for the IEP/ special-education identification, then the child is no longer considered an "exceptional student" under IDEA for purposes of the homeschool program. The downside of this is that the child cannot receive free special education services through the district including therapies like speech or OT that the school might offer. If your child is doing particularly well with their school-provided therapies, it might be worth keeping the IEP. Also, if you decide to re-enroll your child into public school, they will need to undergo the entire psychological evaluation again (which may take up to 60 days) before the school is required to provide special education services - this can lead to delays in services, so it is something to consider.

However, you can still access therapies through your child's health insurance provider. Many therapists offer telehealth services which can be a good option for some families. I recommend scheduling your first appointment with your new provider before revoking your child's IEP to prevent gaps in services.

It is your right to decide whether you want to maintain the IEP or revoke it. Neither choice will affect your end of the year evaluations, but keeping the IEP does mean you'll need to get your objectives pre-approved each year. I offer this for free because I don't want parents of children with special needs to feel that there's yet another obstacle (or expense) in homeschooling their child. You can simply send me your objectives, and I will send you the approval form. Feel free to use vague, generic objectives if you'd like. In all likelihood, your objectives will change several times over the course of the year.

I can also help you tailor your objectives to your child's needs if you prefer to have something more specific to give to your district. Just know that the law does not require your objectives to be very specific or in a particular format. Whether you meet these objectives will have no impact on your end of year evaluation.

If a child has learning challenges but *has not* been formally identified (no IEP), this legal requirement does not apply, though many parents still prefer to work with evaluators familiar with neurodiversity or alternative learning styles. Personally, I am looking for progress that is appropriate for your child, not "grade level" performance.

*(Please refer to the FAQ about nonverbal students if this applies to your child.)*

## Standardized Assessments - What do I need to know?

The Pennsylvania School Code, 24 P.S. § 13-1327.1(e)(1) states that the portfolio for home education students in grades 3, 5 and 8 must include the results of the statewide tests (PSSAs) for reading/language arts and mathematics or nationally normed standardized achievements tests.

***If the supervisor of the home education program requests that the student(s) take the statewide tests administered in these grades, the school district must allow the student to take the test at the school building the home education student normally would attend or other accommodations agreed to by the school district and the parent.***

If you prefer to avoid PSSAs, the Department has approved the use of the most current version of the following nationally normed standardized tests for use by home education programs if they choose not to take the statewide tests:

1. California Achievement Test
2. Comprehensive Testing Program (CTPIV)
3. Iowa Test of Basic Skills
4. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)
5. Metropolitan Achievement Test
6. Peabody Achievement Individual Test – Revised Version
7. Stanford Achievement Test
8. Terra Nova
9. Woodcock-Johnson Revised Tests of Achievement
10. Woodcock-Johnson
11. Wechsler Individual Achievement Test

I generally recommend the [California Achievement Test](#) because it is easily available online or in paper-format mailed to your home, can be administered by the parent, and it is reasonably priced. If you choose the online version, you can have results immediately.

Some of the approved tests are administered by psychologists. If your child was evaluated for special needs during 3rd, 5th, or 8th grade, they might have had one of these approved tests administered. If you're unsure, it is worth asking so you don't deal with unnecessary additional testing.

### Notes about standardized assessments:

There is no minimum score required. Assessment scores are not a primary factor when I conduct evaluations. It's simply a requirement that needs to be checked off for the state.

If your child is not performing on grade level, don't worry. Have them take the test on the level they are currently at. Students are not required to take the test at their registered grade level. However, if you take PSSAs through your district, they will administer it at your child's registered grade level.

## Graduation: What should I know about 12th grade / Graduation evaluations?

12th grade evaluations are similar in format to other years but carry additional weight. In Pennsylvania, if you're issuing your own diploma (as allowed under homeschool law), the evaluator must *confirm that your student has completed all required high school subjects*.

These [required subjects](#) include:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of math
- 3 years of science
- 3 years of social studies
- 2 years of arts and humanities

**English** must include *language, literature, speech, and composition*.

**Mathematics** must include *general mathematics, algebra, and geometry*.

**Social Studies** must cover *civics, U.S. & Pennsylvania history, and world history*.

**Other required areas:** science; geography; art; music; physical education; health; and safety education (including fire safety instruction).

Specific sub-subjects covered can count as early as 7th grade. For instance, if you covered geography in 7th grade, you don't need to cover it again in high school. But you do need to show that you completed it. This is why I recommend saving portfolios from 7th grade and up.

This is particularly beneficial if:

- Your child was ahead of the game and completed algebra I and/or geometry in middle school.
- Your teen really isn't into art or music (or is spending time focusing on other subjects), so you count those two half year courses they took in 7th and 8th grade.
- You got tired of going over PA and/or U.S. history every year and focused on other types of social studies instead.
- You forgot to cover one of the sub-subjects in high school but realized you covered it in 7th or 8th grade.
- You want to graduate your child up to two years early by counting 7th and 8th grade English, math, science, and social studies (if all sub-subject requirements are met).

As your evaluator, I will review your student's 7-12th grade records to ensure these requirements have been met. If everything is in order, I will sign off on the PA-issued diploma in the "Evaluator Signature" section.

## Can my child graduate early?

Yes! Under Pennsylvania homeschool law, students may graduate before age 18 if they have completed all required subjects. Compulsory school attendance ends once a student has legally graduated and received a diploma from their parent/supervisor or a recognized diploma program.

Courses completed in grades 7 and 8 can count toward graduation, as long as they meet the [required subject and sub-subject expectations](#). I'm happy to help you review your records and confirm that graduation requirements have been met.

### What is the cost of the evaluation?

The fee is **\$40 for the first student** and **\$25 for each additional sibling**.

Payment options:

- **Zelle:** 445-444-1266
- **Venmo:** @Alona-Cortes
- **PayPal:** @alonajeansnyder
- **Apple Cash:** 445-444-1266

Payment is due after I send you the evaluation form.

### Do you work for the state?

No. Homeschool evaluators are not contracted or employed by the state of PA to do evaluations. (Though some may be employed in other jobs through the state.) Since there is no official oversight from any employer, company, or other organization, homeschool evaluators exercise a lot of freedom in what they require from homeschooling families. My personal philosophy is that your children are yours - not the state's. Therefore, I make it my goal to conduct evaluations in a way that upholds legal integrity (we are not evading the law) without giving the state a single drop of additional information. I'm on your side, not theirs. I'm simply a homeschooling mom who happens to hold the credentials PA requires for homeschool evaluators.

### If you are in a difficult or unsafe situation:

I know that homeschooling families, like any other family, sometimes face challenging personal circumstances. If you ever feel unsafe or feel that your children may not be safe, you are welcome to reach out to me privately, and I can help connect you with appropriate support resources.

I may not always be able to provide direct assistance, but I will do my best to point you toward people and organizations who can help.

#### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-7233

or text START to 88788

#### **988 Lifeline**

Call or text 988