

Home Schooling

Parents may wish to homeschool their children for many reasons, religious or otherwise. The home schooling process contains some difficulties that may be unknown to some parents or to which little consideration may have otherwise been given.

One difficulty is what happens regarding grade placement when parents decide they want to enroll or re-enroll their children in a public school district. Sometimes it is assumed, for instance, that if a child's home schooling begins during their fifth grade year and three years later it is decided to return to a public school, the child will then be placed in the eighth grade. This is an incorrect assumption. When a child is enrolled at a public school after being home schooled for a period of time, the question the district has to deal with is "What grade does this student now actually belong in?"

In order to determine the child's achievement levels, individual testing is then frequently necessary. The experiences many school districts have with children who have been home schooled is that their achievement may be average to excellent in some areas, but uneven or poor in other areas. With this being the case, these children sometimes test out on an average to below level of their peers upon re-enrolling. It is very challenging and time-consuming (and sometimes expensive) for parents to homeschool their children at a pace commensurate with that done by trained teachers furnished with contemporary materials. There is a variety of curricular materials available by private homeschooling entities. We do not provide any materials for this or test home schooled children's quarterly progress or district-wide MAP/SBAC testing while they are on home schooling status. The learning of social skills among peers also warrants thoughtful consideration. This is an element frequently minimized by home schoolers, but is an important part of the growth and development of the child.

In this same regard, the supervision of this process by local authorities is somewhat nebulous. In some areas of the country, home schooling is fairly closely supervised; in others, supervision is tenuous or only nominal. In Missouri, such students still fall under the compulsory attendance statutes until their seventeenth birthday, so records and logs must be kept in order to meet the applicable state statutes and thereby avoid possible educational neglect charges, for which a fine or imprisonment may be imposed. There is no state recognized high school diploma for home schooled students. Home schooled students may take the high school equivalency examination to obtain a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Most employers, colleges and universities, and the military accept the GED as equivalent to a high school diploma.

Parents dedicated to the home schooling concept need to be familiar with the laws which apply to this situation and, of course, should give serious consideration to whether this is what they really wish to do or whether it just sounds like an interesting idea. The above thoughts are given to assist in this process. Additional information may be obtained through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website at <http://www.dese.mo.gov>. They will send a homeschooling packet by mail upon request, either by phone (573-751-4212) or by e-mail to the address on their web pages. Hot links also refer the user to current Missouri statutory considerations.

Sections 162.996, 167.031 through 167.071, and Section 210.167 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri provide the framework for homeschooling in Missouri.