

Frequently Asked Questions for Home School

1. **What are my options if I'd like to teach my child at home?**

Parents and legal guardians can educate their child from home in three ways:

- a) Independent Home School: State law allows parents or legal guardians to register with the local school system as an independent home school. The parent is the teacher of record and is responsible for meeting the requirements for an independent home school.
- b) Church-Related "Umbrella" Non-Public School: Some approved non-public (private) schools operate home school "umbrella" programs that allow parents or legal guardians to participate as a parent-teacher in the school under the supervision of the school's director.
- c) Accredited Online Non-Public School: These non-public (private) schools are approved through a regional accrediting agency as permitted by Tennessee's State Board of Education (SBE). Students enrolled in an accredited online school attend classes remotely from home.

To learn more about these options, visit the Tennessee Department of Education's [Home School webpage](#).

2. **Can a parent withdraw a child from public school to home school at any point in the school year?**

Yes. The laws regarding independent home school do not require filing an intent to home school by a specific date. Parents or legal guardians may withdraw their child from public school and register as an independent home school at any point in the school year. Likewise, parents or legal guardians may withdraw their child from public school and enroll them in a non-public school, including a home school umbrella or accredited online school, at any point in the year if the non-public school accepts the student. The local school system may require proof of enrollment upon withdrawal. Compulsory education laws require that a student be enrolled in an approved public, non-public or independent home school.

3. **If a student is 18 years old, can they withdraw themselves as an independent home school student?**

No. [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3050\(a\)\(1\)](#) defines a home school as "a school conducted or directed by a parent or parents or a legal guardian or guardians for their own children." Therefore, students would not be allowed to withdraw themselves from their current public or non-public school and enroll as an independent home school student even if they are 18 years old.

4. **Is a power of attorney sufficient as proof of legal guardianship?**

No. A power of attorney is not the same thing as legal guardianship for the purpose of withdrawing a student from home school. Legal guardianship is appointed by a judge through a court of law.

5. **Can a student who has attended an independent home school during the kindergarten year enter the first grade in a public school?**

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-201](#) requires students in Tennessee to attend an approved kindergarten program prior to entering the first grade. Independent home school is deemed an approved kindergarten program provided the student is five on or before August 15 and is properly registered

with the school district for independent home school. Upon enrolling into a public school, the home school student may be tested to determine placement.

6. *What rights do home school students have for special education services from the local school district?*

Students who are home schooled are entitled to the same special education services as children who are placed in private schools by their parent or legal guardian. Students with disabilities who are placed by their parents or legal guardian in a private school or home school are not entitled to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) through an individualized education program (IEP). The school district is responsible for providing equitable services to home school students who are determined eligible as a child with a disability. This is accomplished through a “services plan” and is generally a type of related service, such as speech therapy, as determined by the school district where the student is registered to home school. Parents and legal guardians should contact their local school district for complete information.

7. *Are home school students allowed to take classes or participate in extracurricular activities at a public school?*

Pursuant to [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3050\(a\)\(1\)](#), “Public school facilities may be used by home school participants with the approval of the principal of the school, but this permissive authority shall not be construed to confer any right upon the participants to use public school facilities. If approved, use shall be in accordance with rules established by the local board of education.”

8. *Are home school students allowed to participate in public school athletic programs?*

An independently registered home school student may participate in public school athletic programs if allowed by the local education agency (LEA). For interscholastic athletic competition, LEAs must allow home school students to participate under certain conditions: see [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3050\(e\)](#) below. This does not apply to students attending a Category IV church-related school or a Category III accredited online school.

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3050\(e\)](#) states:

(1) If any of the public schools established under the jurisdiction of an LEA are members of an organization or an association that regulates interscholastic athletic competition, and if such organization or association establishes or maintains eligibility requirements for home school students desiring to participate in interscholastic athletics at a member school, then the LEA shall permit participation in interscholastic athletics at those schools by home school students who satisfy the eligibility requirements established by the organization or association.

(2) This subsection (e) does not guarantee that a home school student trying out for an interscholastic athletics team will make the team or supplant the authority of coaches or other school officials in deciding who makes the team. This subsection (e) is intended to guarantee only that the home school student shall not be prohibited from trying out for an interscholastic athletics team, if the student is eligible under the rules of the organization or association, solely by reason of the student's status as a home school student.

(3) This subsection (e) shall not be construed to limit or supplant the authority of the organization or association to determine eligibility and to establish, modify and enforce its rules and eligibility requirements, including those applicable to home school students.

9. *Are home school students allowed to participate in JROTC?*

Yes. Pursuant to [10 U.S.C. § 2031\(h\)\(1\)](#), high schools are required to allow home school students to enroll in JROTC. The federal law states, "Each public secondary educational institution that maintains a unit under this section shall permit membership in the unit to homeschooled students residing in the area served by the institution who are qualified for membership in the unit (but for lack of enrollment in the institution)."

10. *Is the state curriculum mandated for independent home school students?*

No. Parent-teachers are responsible for selecting and purchasing the curriculum used in their independent home school. [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3050](#) provides little guidance specific to the curriculum a parent or legal guardian must use. The law states that the parent or legal guardian shall submit the proposed curriculum to the director of schools, however it does not specify what that curriculum should be. Parents should keep in mind the testing requirement in grades 5, 7, and 9 in which their child will be tested on the grade level state curriculum in reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies. Those subjects should be included in the proposed curriculum to ensure students will be prepared for testing in those areas.

11. *Is the local school district responsible for testing students enrolled in church-related home school umbrella programs or accredited online schools?*

No. The local school district is responsible for testing only those students registered as independent home school students. The church-related umbrella program or accredited online school is responsible for testing its enrolled students.

12. *Can a parent or legal guardian of an independent home school student in grades 5, 7, or 9 choose to have their student tested somewhere other than their local school system?*

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3050\(b\)\(5\)\(A-B\)](#) states that tests can be administered by a professional testing service within thirty (30) days of the date of the statewide test and at the expense of the parent-teacher. However, it must be the same state-board-approved tests administered in public schools. Currently, there are no state-board-approved assessments available through a professional testing service location.

13. *Which end-of-course exams are required of 9th grade independent home school students?*

If a home school student in grade 9 is taking a course for which there is an end-of-course test, that student should be required to take that end-of-course exam. That will mean some 9th grade students, depending on the courses they are taking, will have fewer tests to take that year than others.

14. *Who is responsible for issuing a diploma or transcripts for a home school student?*

Transcripts and diplomas should be issued by the school where the student was enrolled. Parent-teachers are responsible for creating and issuing transcripts and diplomas for independent home school students. Students attending a home school umbrella program, or an accredited online school will be issued transcripts and diplomas from the non-public school.

15. How do I know if an accredited online school is approved in Tennessee?

To be an acceptable accredited online school for a student residing in Tennessee, the school must be accredited by an agency that has been approved by the Tennessee State Board of Education. The board of education has authorized these accrediting agencies to approve Category III non-public schools for students in Tennessee. To identify which agencies are approved, visit the [Home School webpage](#) and click on the *Accredited Online Schools List*. The approved agencies are listed at the top of the page.

16. What if I want to enroll my child in an online school that is not approved by a Tennessee State Board of Education authorized regional accrediting agency?

To comply with Tennessee's compulsory attendance laws, students must attend an approved public, private, or home school if they are between the ages of six (6) and seventeen (17), inclusively. To be considered an approved school, online schools must be accredited by an agency approved by the Tennessee State Board of Education (see question #16). If a parent or legal guardian wants to use an online school that is not approved in Tennessee, the parent or legal guardian may choose to register their child as an independent home school student. This would allow the parent-teacher to use the online school as part of their selected curriculum for their student. The parent or legal guardian would be responsible for meeting the requirements for operating an independent home school. Another option might be enrolling the student in an approved church-related umbrella school that allows the parent-teacher to select their own curriculum resources. The parent would be responsible for discussing the curriculum requirements with the selected umbrella school. A list of approved Category IV church-related schools can be located on the [Non-Public Schools webpage](#).

17. Can a home school student graduate early?

Yes. Home school students can graduate early so long as they meet the early graduation guidelines of the district where they live. [State Board of Education Policy 2.103](#) states, "A student who does not participate in the [Move on When Ready](#) program may still graduate earlier than the end of their senior year of high school, provided the student meets all graduation requirements outlined in Section 1 of this policy and any additional requirements for early graduation set by the LEA."

18. Can I hire a tutor for my home school student?

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3050\(c\)](#) states, "In the event of illness of a parent-teacher, or at the discretion of the parent-teacher, a tutor, having the same qualifications that would be required of a parent-teacher teaching the grade level or course, may be employed by the parent-teacher."

This does not allow the parent-teacher to substitute the tutor's credentials for the parent-teacher's credentials when registering the child for independent home school. The parent or legal guardian must still meet the requirements for home schooling.

19. Can my home school child take the ACT or PSAT at the local public school?

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3050\(f\)\(3\)](#) allows independent home school students to take the AP and PSAT/NMSQT examinations at any public school offering the examinations. Independent home school students wanting to take the ACT or SAT can sign up to take these assessments at any open testing location. More information is available on the ACT and SAT websites.

20. Do credits transfer for home school students?

The Tennessee State Board of Education has approved rules for the transfer of credits for students enrolled in non-public or home school. Students enrolled in a Category IV church-related home school umbrella or registered as independent home school students may be required to take placement tests when transferring to a public or non-public school. Students enrolled in a Category III accredited school will receive transfer credit for work completed when transferring to a public school or a Category I, II, or III private school if the school from which the student is transferring supplies an appropriately certified transcript to the enrolling school.

21. Can a home school student participate in TN Promise?

Yes. According to the Tennessee Promise Frequently Asked Questions at [Tennessee Promise Scholarship \(tn.gov\)](https://www.tn.gov/education/tennessee-promise), “A high school senior, beginning with the class of 2015, who graduates from an eligible Tennessee high school, completes a Tennessee home school program, or prior to his or her 19th birthday, obtains a GED or HiSET diploma. Students will apply by the November deadline of their high school senior year or the year in which he/she will obtain the GED/HiSET and begin working with a mentor and attending mandatory meetings in their counties.”