



What is home education?

Home education is the sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent in order to satisfy statutory school attendance requirements.¹ A parent may use various methods to direct a home education program that provides “sequentially progressive instruction” including, for example:

- ❖ Instructing the student.
- ❖ Enrolling the student in courses part-time in a public or private school.
- ❖ Enrolling the student online in the Florida Virtual School (FLVS). To enroll in FLVS courses, the student's parent must submit documentation to FLVS verifying that the student is registered in a home education program with the student's school district.²
- ❖ Enrolling the student in correspondence courses.³

Who may teach in a home education setting?

Any parent who complies with the reporting, record keeping, and student evaluation requirements specified in Florida law may conduct a home education program. The parent is not required to be a certified teacher.⁴

What are the responsibilities of a parent who establishes a home education program?

A parent who conducts a home education program must:

- ❖ Send a written notice of intent to the district school superintendent of the county in which the parent resides.
- ❖ Maintain a student work portfolio to document the student's educational activities, including writings, worksheets, or creative materials used or developed by the student.
- ❖ Make the portfolio available for inspection by the district school superintendent upon 15-days written notice.
- ❖ Preserve the student's portfolio for two years.
- ❖ Provide an annual educational evaluation of the student's educational progress.
- ❖ Submit a letter of termination within 30 days of completion of the home education program.⁵

¹ Section 1002.01(1), F.S.

² Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, Home Education FAQs, Instruction, http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/home_education/faqs.asp (last visited June 29, 2010).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Section 1002.41(1), F.S.

⁵ *Id.*

How is the educational progress of a home education student evaluated?

A parent may select one of the following methods of evaluation:

- ❖ A portfolio review and discussion with the student conducted by a Florida-certified teacher chosen by the parent;
- ❖ A nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;
- ❖ A state student assessment test used by the school district and administered by a certified teacher at a location and under testing conditions approved by the school district;
- ❖ An evaluation by a psychologist holding a valid, active license; or
- ❖ An evaluation by any other valid measurement tool that is mutually agreed upon by the superintendent and the parent.⁶

What oversight does the state and school district have over home education programs?

Because home education programs are not included in the state public education system, neither the state nor school districts may prescribe a curriculum or course of study for home education programs.⁷ However, the state and school districts retain certain administrative oversight responsibilities necessary to ensure that the home education student and the student's parent are complying with the statutory requirements governing home education.

A copy of the student's annual educational evaluation must be filed in the superintendent's office.⁸ The superintendent must review the evaluation results to ensure that the student is making adequate educational progress. If the student does not demonstrate such progress, the superintendent is required to notify the parents that they have one year to provide remedial instruction. At the end of that year, the student may only continue in a home education program if a re-evaluation shows acceptable educational progress.⁹ The district superintendent may inspect a home education student's portfolio at any time, upon 15 days written notice, but is not required to do so.¹⁰

May a home education student participate in public school extracurricular activities?

Yes. An eligible home education student may participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities¹¹ at the public school to which the student would be assigned, the public school that the student could choose to attend pursuant to controlled open enrollment provisions, or a private school that the student could choose to attend pursuant to a participation agreement.¹² If

⁶ Section 1002.41(1)(c), F.S.

⁷ Section 1001.21, F.S.

⁸ Section 1002.41(1)(c), F.S.

⁹ Section 1002.41(2), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 1002.41(1)(b), F.S.

¹¹ Extracurricular activities are school-authorized athletic or education-related activities for students occurring during or outside the regular instructional school day. Section 1006.15(2), F.S.

¹² Section 1006.15(3)(c), F.S.

enrollment in a class is required for participation in the extracurricular activity, such as band class during the day in order to take part in the marching band, the home education student must be afforded the opportunity to enroll in the class.¹³ To be eligible for participation, a home education student must:

- ❖ Be registered in a home education program that meets the requirements of Florida law.¹⁴
- ❖ Demonstrate educational progress by an agreed upon method of evaluation.¹⁵
- ❖ Meet the same residency requirements as other students in the school.¹⁶
- ❖ Meet the same standards of acceptance, behavior, and performance required of other participating students.¹⁷
- ❖ Register his or her intent to participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities with the school before the beginning date of the season for the activity for which he or she wishes to participate. A home education student must be able to participate in curricular activities if that is a requirement for an extracurricular activity.¹⁸

A student who transfers from a home education program to a public school before or during the first grading period of the school year is academically eligible to participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities during the first grading period provided the student has a successful evaluation from the previous school year.¹⁹

A public or private school student who has not maintained academic eligibility may not participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities as a home education student until the student successfully demonstrates educational progress in a home education program for one grading period.²⁰

What services may a home education student with a disability receive from his or her school district?

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to conduct "child find," meaning states must identify, locate, and evaluate all children in the state who are in need of special education and related services.²¹ Under the child find requirements, a home education student who is suspected of having a disability is entitled to a school district evaluation to determine whether he or she has an eligible disability. If the child has such disability, the parent may enroll the student in a public school and the school district must provide the student with a free appropriate public education according to an individualized education program.²² If the parent declines to enroll the child in a public school, the school district may, but is not required to, provide the student with some level of service such as speech/language therapy, or other

¹³ Section 1006.15(3)(c)5., F.S.

¹⁴ Section 1006.15(3)(c)1., F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1006.15(3)(c)2., F.S.

¹⁶ Section 1006.15(3)(c)3., F.S.

¹⁷ Section 1006.15(3)(c)4., F.S.

¹⁸ Section 1006.15(3)(c)5., F.S.

¹⁹ Section 1006.15(3)(c)6., F.S.

²⁰ Section 1006.15(3)(c)7., F.S.

²¹ 20 U.S.C. s. 1412(3).

²² 20 U.S.C. s. 1412(1) and (4).

services, according to school district policy.²³ Home education students may receive testing and evaluation services at diagnostic and resource centers.²⁴

What are the requirements for students who exhibit a pattern of nonattendance to enroll in a home education program?

If the parent of a child who has been identified as exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance enrolls the child in a home education program, the district school superintendent must provide the parent with a copy of the home education law and the accountability requirements of the truancy law.²⁵ The superintendent must also refer the parent to a home education review committee. The parent must submit the student's portfolio to the home education review committee within the first 30 calendar days of the establishment of the program and every 30 days thereafter until the committee determines that the home education program is in compliance.²⁶ Failure to provide a portfolio will result in termination of the home education program by the superintendent and require the parent to enroll the child in an attendance option that meets the definition of regular school attendance within three days.²⁷

The review committee is composed of the school district home education contact person and at least two home educators selected by the parent from a list of eligible home education parents maintained by the district. To be an eligible home education parent, that parent must have conducted a home education program for at least three years.²⁸

What acceleration mechanisms are available to students in a home education program?

Home education students may participate in dual enrollment, career dual enrollment,²⁹ early admission,³⁰ and credit by examination³¹ at community colleges and universities.³² Dual

²³ Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, Home Education FAQs, Exceptional Student Education, http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/home_education/faqs.asp (last visited June 29, 2010).

²⁴ Section 1002.41(9), F.S. The DOE must maintain regional and diagnostic and learning resource centers for exceptional students to assist in the provision of medical, psychological, and educational testing and other services designed to evaluate and diagnose exceptionalities, to make referrals for and facilitate the necessary instruction and services of exceptional students. Section 1006.03, F.S.

²⁵ Section 1003.26(1)(f)1., F.S.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ Section 1003.26(1)(f)2., F.S.

²⁸ Section 1003.26(1)(f)1., F.S.

²⁹ Section 1007.271, F.S.

³⁰ Section 1007.27(5), F.S.

³¹ Section 1007.27(7), F.S.

³² Section 1007.27(4), F.S. Florida Law does not require postsecondary institutions to develop an articulation agreement with home education students. See s. 1007.235, F.S. Many institutions have developed home education agreements that communicate eligibility criteria, the process for applying for admission and registering for courses, and costs. Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, Home Education, *Technical Assistance Paper: Home Education and Dual Enrollment Articulation No. 2006-19*, at 1 (Aug. 2006), available at http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/home_education/files/homeeed_att.pdf.

enrollment courses must be creditable toward the completion of a home education program, an associate degree, a career certificate, or a baccalaureate degree.³³ To participate in the dual enrollment program, an eligible home education student must provide proof of enrollment in a home education program and be responsible for his or her own instructional materials and transportation unless provided for otherwise.³⁴ Each career center, community college, and state university must:

- ❖ Delineate courses and programs for dually enrolled home education students. Courses and programs may be added, revised, or deleted at any time.
- ❖ Identify eligibility criteria for home education student participation, not to exceed those required of other dually enrolled students.³⁵

All students who are eligible for dual enrollment courses are exempt from paying registration, tuition, or lab fees.³⁶

What type of diploma do home education students receive?

School districts, adult high schools, and community colleges are not authorized to award a standard high school diploma to a home education student. A home education student may take the General Educational Development (GED) test at an education center and be awarded a Florida GED diploma if the student receives a passing score.³⁷

Are home education students eligible for Bright Futures Scholarships?

Yes. A home education student may be eligible for a Bright Futures Scholarship if he or she meets the general requirements for the scholarship and is registered with the school district in which he or she resides as a home education student during the 11th and 12th grades. The school district must confirm the registration of a home education student.³⁸

How many students in Florida are registered in home education programs?

The following chart shows the historical increase in the number of students and families involved in home education programs:³⁹

³³ Sections 1007.27(4) and 1007.271(10)(a), F.S.

³⁴ Section 1007.271(10)(a)1. and 2., F.S.

³⁵ Section 1007.271(10)(b), F.S.

³⁶ Section 1007.271(13), F.S.

³⁷ Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, Home Education FAQs: High School Home Education Programs, http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/Home_Education/faqs.asp (last visited July 1, 2010).

³⁸ Section 1002.41(5), F.S.; *see generally* Florida Department of Education, Florida Student Scholarship Grant Programs, Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program, Home Education Applicants, <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf/homepac.htm> (last visited July 8, 2010).

³⁹ Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, *Home Education in Florida: Annual Report 2009-2010* (June 2010) available at http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/home_education/files/0910_Annual_Report.pdf.

Academic Year	Families*	Students**
2000-01	27,792	41,128
2001-02	29,417	44,460
2002-03	30,892	45,333
2003-04	32,166	47,151
2004-05	35,377	51,110
2005-06	36,149	52,613
2006-07	36,939	55,822
2007-08	39,100	56,650
2008-09	42,431	60,913
2009-10	42,754	62,567

*Number of families statewide that registered their intent to establish home education programs.

**Number of students statewide who participated in home education programs.

Where can I get additional information?

Florida Department of Education

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

(850) 245-0502

Toll-Free Information Hotline: (800) 447-1636

<http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org>

General Education Development

GED information

Toll free phone number: (800) 237-5113

Florida House of Representatives

Education Committee

(850) 488-7451

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>