

## Your Question

A staff member at a state legislative office asked for information about states' homeschooling policies. Specifically: (1) information about performance of homeschooled students, (2) data and demographic information about students being homeschooled, (3) and 50-state overviews of various homeschooling components.

## Our Response

### Student Performance

It is difficult to find statistics on performance of homeschooled students, in part because not every state requires them to take state assessments. In the states that require or allow homeschooled students to take state assessments, the department of education may have specific data on these students' performance. I suspect that will require contacting the states' departments of education directly.

### Student Data

Not every state requires parents providing homeschool instruction to register with or provide notification to school districts or the state. Even in states that require parents to provide notification to school districts or departments of education, these organizations may not compile and report this information. Thus, I was unable to find any state-level data on homeschooled students. You may need to contact your state department of education directly to see if they maintain state-level information about homeschooled students.

However, there is some national data available. In 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics released a [report](#) estimating the number and percentage of homeschooled students nationally (also [here](#)). The estimates, from the 2012 National Household Education Survey, are the most recent figures available. In 2012 there were an estimated 1,773,000 homeschool students across the country, about 3.4% of students nationally. By way of comparison, in 1999 there were about 850,000 students being homeschooled, representing 1.7% of students nationally.

These 1,773,000 students were largely white – 83 percent – with 41 percent living in rural areas. A larger share of the students were in middle and high school. The [most common reasons](#) parents gave for homeschooling their children were: a desire to provide religious instruction or moral instruction, concerns about the environment of other schools, and dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools.

### Additional Information

- ✓ This [2016 Education Commission of the States document](#) provides additional information about states' homeschooling accountability provisions.
- ✓ The [Coalition for Responsible Home Education](#) provides various resources about homeschooling.

## 50-State Overview of States' Homeschooling Laws

You asked for a 50-state overview of state laws in the following areas:

- States with homeschooling laws.
- Health and safety requirements.
- Instructor qualifications.
- Curriculum and standards required to be taught (including information about access to homeschooling materials).

The information below was compiled to create our 2015 resource "[State Homeschool Policies: A patchwork of provisions](#)" and is current as of 2015.

### *States with Homeschool Laws*

It is difficult to give an exact number of how many states have laws explicitly allowing homeschooling.

Homeschooling is typically addressed through states' compulsory school attendance exemption policies, but states approach the issue very differently. Homeschooling is most often governed in state policy in one of the following ways: (1) explicitly allowed in statute or regulation, (2) allowed under the umbrella of private or church schools, (3) tacitly allowed under private school policies, (4) governed through local district or school oversight, or (5) some combination of the above. Additionally, a small number of states' homeschooling policies are, at least in part, shaped by case law.

Some states provide little to no regulation, while other states provide more rigorous oversight. Generally, most states take a relatively hands-off approach to providing oversight to homeschooled students. Below are a few examples of how various states approach homeschooling.

- **Arizona:** State law exempts students being educated at home by a parent from compulsory school attendance laws. Parents must file an affidavit of intent with the county superintendent just once and notify the superintendent if homeschooling is terminated. According to the state's department of education, homeschooled students are under the jurisdiction of the county.
- **Delaware:** State law allows three kinds of homeschools: (1) multi-family homeschool (more than one family homeschooling together in multiple residences); (2) single-family homeschool; (3) single-family homeschool coordinated with a school district (using a curriculum approved by the local superintendent).
- **Iowa:** The state allows two methods for homeschooling: (1) competent private instruction, which includes two options; and (2) independent private instruction. Students under the first method may be under the supervision of a licensed teacher, depending on the option, and may have access to a school district's or private school's home assistance program, which provides various supports to homeschooling parents.
- **Maryland:** Parents provide yearly notification to the local superintendent. There are three options for providing homeschool: (1) instruction by parents under the supervision of the local school district; (2) correspondence courses under the supervision of a church school; (3) correspondence courses through an approved private school.
- **New York:** Parents provide yearly notification to the local district of intent to homeschool and must submit a yearly individualized home instruction plan for each child. Parents must also provide the district with quarterly updates, and students failing to progress properly may be placed on probation.

- **South Carolina:** The state allows parents to homeschool under one of three types of programs: (1) prior to homeschooling, parents must apply to and be approved by the district’s board of trustees, student must participate in annual statewide testing, and the district may withdraw homeschool approval if deficiencies are found in the student’s instruction; (2) homeschooling allowed under the auspices of the South Carolina Association of Independent Home School Boards; (3) homeschooling allowed under the auspices of a homeschool association with 50+ members.

### *Health and Safety Requirements*

We did not specifically look at states’ health and safety requirements for homeschool students, so we do not have a 50-state overview of this specific topic. However, here are a few state examples.

- **Arkansas:** Parents may not homeschool a child if there is a registered sex offender living in the home.
- **Florida:** Parents have multiple options for the required annual evaluation. Two options include assessment by a certified teacher or an evaluation from a licensed psychologist.
- **Montana:** Instruction must occur “in a building that complies with applicable local health and safety regulations,” although it isn’t clear if or what kind of inspections are required. Parents must maintain immunization records.
- **Nebraska:** Parents must maintain immunization records, although there is an exemption available for religious beliefs.
- **New York:** If instruction is provided at a location other than the parents’ primary residence, it must be in a building that is not in violation of the local building code.
- **Utah:** School districts are specifically prohibited from inspecting homeschool facilities.

### *Instructor Qualifications*

**Fourteen states and D.C.** have requirements of some sort for homeschool instructors, generally requiring the parent providing instruction to have a high school diploma or its equivalent. To the best of our knowledge, states do not require homeschool instructors to go through a specific credentialing process beyond showing how they meet existing state requirements.

D.C.	High school diploma or its equivalent; instructors may petition for a waiver from this requirement.
Georgia	High school diploma or its equivalent OR parents may hire a tutor with the same.
Iowa	There are multiple methods for providing homeschooling. One of the options instruction by a licensed teacher or a parent under the supervision of a licensed teacher.
Michigan	There are two methods for homeschooling. One option requires instructors to have a teaching certificate or bachelor’s degree, but the department of education indicates parents may request a waiver for religious beliefs. <i>(Waiver allowed per the department website, although I couldn’t find it in state policy.)</i>
Minnesota	Instructors must hold teaching license or be supervised by someone with a license or someone who successfully completed a teaching exam or holds a bachelor’s degree. Parents are exempt from these requirements if the student is assessed by a yearly exam.
Nebraska	<i>No specific qualifications outlined in state statute. However, department regulations require instructors to show evidence they are qualified to monitor instruction in the basic skills of language arts, math, science, social studies, and health.</i>
New Mexico	High school diploma or its equivalent.

North Carolina	High school diploma or its equivalent.
North Dakota	High school diploma or its equivalent; parents without one should be monitored for at least two years by a licensed teacher assigned by the district or selected by the parent.
Ohio	High school diploma or its equivalent; parents without one must work under the direction of someone with a bachelor's degree.
Pennsylvania	High school diploma or its equivalent.
South Carolina	High school diploma or its equivalent and pass a basic skills exam OR hold a bachelor's degree.
Tennessee	High school diploma or its equivalent.
Virginia	High school diploma or its equivalent OR provide evidence that the parent can provide an adequate education.
Washington	Three options: (1) parent has completed 45+ college level quarter hours (or equivalent semester hours) or has completed a college course in home-based instruction, (2) is deemed qualified by the local superintendent, or (3) parent must be supervised by a certificated person (licensed teacher or administrator). However, parents may receive a waiver from these requirements.
West Virginia	High school diploma or its equivalent.

### *Curriculum and Standards*

To the best of my knowledge, no state requires homeschool students to use a specific curriculum. Indeed, part of the draw to homeschooling for many families is the freedom to select the educational materials. However, **29 states and D.C.** do require students to receive instruction in certain subjects (see below). Two additional states (New Jersey and Tennessee – see below) have some instruction requirements, but they are vague enough that we don't include them in the counts.

California	Receive instruction in the branches of study required in the schools of the state.
Colorado	Reading, writing, speaking, math, history, civics, literature, science, U.S. constitution.
D.C.	Language arts, math, science, social studies, art, music, health, PE; homeschools are specifically not required to follow public school curriculum.
Georgia	Math, English language arts, science, social studies, reading.
Illinois	Taught the "branches of education" taught to children in public school (language arts, math, biological and physical sciences, social sciences, fine arts, physical development, health).
Iowa	Iowa has two methods for homeschooling. Under one option, students should be taught in math, reading, language arts, science, social studies.
Kentucky	Instruction in subjects similar to public schools, including: reading, writing, spelling, grammar, history, mathematics, civics.
Louisiana	Students must receive "a sustained curriculum of a quality at least equal to that offered by public schools at the same grade level."
Maine	English and language arts, math, science, social studies, PE, health, library skills, fine arts, Maine studies (in one grade), computer proficiency (once in grades 7-12).
Massachusetts	Students receive instruction "in all the studies required by law."
Michigan	Reading, spelling, math, science, history, civics, literature, writing, grammar.
Minnesota	Reading, writing, literature, fine arts, math, science, social studies, health, PE.
Montana	Students must receive instruction in the subjects required of public schools. In middle and high school: English language arts, math, physical and life sciences, social studies, visual arts, music, CTE courses or pathways, world languages, electives; health for high school. Parents are "solely responsible" for selecting instructional materials.

Nebraska	Language arts, math, science, social studies, health.
Nevada	English, math, science, social studies.
New Hampshire	Math, science, language, government, history, health, reading, writing, spelling, history of New Hampshire, U.S. constitution; exposure to art and music.
<i>New Jersey</i>	<i>Not specified. However, students must “regularly attend the public schools of the district or a day school in which there is given instruction equivalent to that provided in the public schools for children of similar grades and attainments or to receive equivalent instruction elsewhere than at school.”</i>
New Mexico	Students must receive a “basic academic educational program,” including: reading, language arts, math, social studies, science.
New York	Students must receive instruction in “various subjects,” including: math, spelling, geography, history.
North Dakota	Must be taught in the subjects required by law to be taught to public school students.
Ohio	English language arts, geography, history, math, science, health, PE, fine arts, first aid.
Pennsylvania	English, math, science, geography, history of U.S., history of Pennsylvania, civics, safety, health, PE, music, art (elementary school); other subject requirements for high school.
Rhode Island	Reading, writing, geography, math, U.S. history, Rhode Island history, American government.
South Carolina	Reading, writing, math, science, social studies. In grades 7-12: composition, literature.
South Dakota	Language arts, math.
<i>Tennessee</i>	<i>Not specified in statute. However, parents of students who fall behind in their grade level in reading, language arts, math, or science test scores must submit to various corrective actions.</i>
Vermont	Basic communications skills (reading, writing, use of numbers), citizenship, U.S. history, Vermont history, PE, health, English, literature, natural sciences, fine arts.
Washington	Occupational education, science, math, language, social studies, history, health, reading, writing, spelling, art, music.
West Virginia	Subjects required to be taught in elementary schools in the state.
Wisconsin	Students must receive a “sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction” in reading, language arts, math, social studies, science, health.
Wyoming	Curriculum must meet requirements for a “basic academic educational program” and provide a “sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction” in reading, writing, math, civics, history, literature, science.

### Materials

Finally, you asked for information about programs that provide repositories for instructional materials, or some other method for distributing materials to homeschool instructors. While there are many home school associations and organization that can provide collaborative resources for parents at the national, state, and local levels, states generally do not provide instructional materials or other resources to homeschool instructors. As mentioned previously, part of the draw for many homeschooling families is the freedom to use a variety of instructional materials and approaches. I suspect any efforts to coordinate or provide instructional and academic materials – if they exist – would happen at the district or school level rather than through a coordinated effort at the state level. However, there are a few things worth mentioning.

- In **Iowa**, parents may homeschool under one of two options, each with different requirements. One of the two options allows for "**home school assistance programs**," provided by school districts for homeschooling parents. Essentially, school districts offer parents access to a licensed teacher to support and supervise the parents' homeschooling activities, and districts may provide materials at the request of parents. It isn't clear

how many of these programs exist, as the program is optional for school districts. More information available [here](#) and [here](#), and [an example from a program in Iowa City, Iowa](#).

- **Virtual and online schooling** is homeschool-adjacent, as online and virtual school options are quite popular with many homeschool families. Several school districts and even states have started or expanded their online school offerings recently, which may be viable resources for materials for homeschool families. This means that families participating in state or district online programs are participating in state or district educational programs and standards, and likely have access to some state or district academic or instructional resources. However, it doesn't appear that states and districts have done much to delineate if and how homeschool students can access online course offerings through public schools. **Florida** is a notable exception, as they specifically state that homeschool students may attend the state's virtual school, and the Florida Virtual School is a large provider of homeschooling resources in Florida and across the country. On the other side, a few states have specifically stated that homeschool students *may not* participate in the state's virtual school.
- A few states allow students to take academic courses at a local school or district. If a student is allowed to attend an academic class at a local school, it follows that the student would likely have access to the textbooks or other curricular materials for the course.