

## Illinois Homeschooling

Welcome to the Illinois State Board of Education's webpage on homeschooling, where you will find information on registration, requirements, resources, and more. The information is divided into several topics, which you can click on to learn more.

### Not sure if you should homeschool? Start here

The information on this page may help you make a decision if you are unsure about whether homeschooling is the right choice for your family. Before you begin, ask yourself the following question, *"What am I trying to achieve or accomplish by homeschooling?"* Make a few notes about your answer and keep them until the final step.

### Step 1 – Exhaust all options with the local public school

Make sure you've exhausted all options regarding your child's attendance at a public school before withdrawing them to pursue a homeschool education. This should involve expressing your concerns to the entire chain of command: Teacher > Administrator > Superintendent > Local School Board > Regional Office of Education > Illinois State Board of Education. As you work on solving your issue, keep the following things in mind:

- Your school district's website will have the dates of board meetings and contact information for members of the board. You can also attend a meeting and make a public comment or speak in a closed session if you have a complaint about a specific school employee.
- All school districts are required to have a policy manual, [bullying policy](#), and [accelerated placement policy](#) that have rules and regulations they must follow. Make sure you have reviewed these policies and refer to them in your conversations.
- If your child has special needs, make sure you know the [rights you have as a parent](#).

### Step 2 – Start with an overview

There are a variety of websites that provide an overview of the homeschool process. A good first step as you make your decision to homeschool would be to search the questions below in your internet browser. Be sure to look at a variety of websites to get multiple opinions and perspectives.

- Should I homeschool?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling?
- What can I expect if I homeschool?

### Step 3 – Learn from other homeschool families

Now that you have an idea of what to expect, try getting in touch with other homeschool families to learn from their experiences. If you don't know anyone who homeschools, you might try asking your local librarians if they know any homeschool families that might be willing to speak with you.

If you're unable to talk to someone in person, you can read about the experience of homeschool families online. Make sure to read successful and unsuccessful stories to get a balanced view of what to expect.

#### Step 4 – Review the information specific to Illinois

Return to the [main homeschool page](#) and read through the specific information for each topic. Each topic has several questions and answers that should provide you with a full overview of what to expect if you homeschool in Illinois. Remember, every state has different homeschool laws so be cautious of information on other websites about homeschool requirements in Illinois.

#### Step 5 – Make the choice

By now you should have a general idea of homeschooling, learned from the experiences of others, and familiarized yourself with all the information specific to Illinois. Go back and look at your answer to the question *“What am I trying to achieve or accomplish by homeschooling?”* Based on what you have learned, can you achieve or accomplish your goals by homeschooling? If so, it may be the right choice for your family. If not, you may want to reconsider other options.

#### Requirements

Homeschool requirements vary greatly from state to state. In Illinois, the only specific requirement is that certain subject areas be taught. (See A below.) Therefore, as you explore the questions in this section, instead of looking for a list of requirements to comply with, it is better to ask yourself *“What should I do on my own to make my homeschool program successful?”*

If the lack of a state-level requirement leaves you at a loss on how to handle something, think about how that issue might be handled at a public school -- and if the public school solution makes sense for your homeschool program.

What are the required subjects, classes, and number of school days?

#### Subjects

[Per 105 ILCS 5/26-1](#) and [27-1](#), you must provide instruction, in the English language, in the following subject areas:

- Language arts
- Mathematics
- Biological and physical science
- Social science (social studies)
- Fine arts
- Physical development and health

#### Classes

There are no specific classes that are required for homeschool students. You can decide to require or not require specific courses in the above subjects, such as chemistry, Algebra 2, civics, etc., as you design your own homeschool program. This is different from public schools which require that specific classes and credits be earned in order to graduate. **However, if your child is considering applying to college,** you are strongly encouraged to use the same [high school graduation requirements used in public schools](#).

Online schools may require a student to take certain classes. Those classes, which may or may not be the same as the public school graduation requirements in Illinois, are determined by each individual online school. It is a good idea to ask an administrator at the online school how its required courses align with college enrollment requirements.

When in doubt, you can always contact the college your child is interested in and ask about enrollment requirements.

#### [Number/Length of School Days](#)

There are no requirements for the number of school days or the length of a school day for homeschool students. Classes can occur any day of the week and at any time during the day.

Although there are no specific requirements, you are strongly encouraged to develop a consistent schedule for your homeschool program. You could choose to follow the same calendar year as your local public school or create your own. In any case, make sure your child has a consistent daily schedule for their learning, especially if they plan to return to their local public school in the future.

Please reach out to your local school district if you would like to see its calendar.

#### [Additional Requirements](#)

As you may have noticed, the only requirement to homeschool in Illinois is to offer the subject areas specified on page 2. Graduation requirements, homework, testing, grade advancement, textbook/curriculum choice, recordkeeping, etc. are all decisions that the homeschool parent or guardian will make.

Although there are no specific recordkeeping requirements, you are strongly encouraged to keep good records of your homeschool program. If you are ever asked for proof of your child's education (such as when re-enrolling in public school), it is your responsibility to provide documentation, such as report cards, syllabi, attendance logs, standardized test results, etc.

#### [Do I need to submit any paperwork or forms in order to homeschool legally?](#)

There is only one [voluntary form](#) related to homeschooling.

However, the agency recommends that you notify your child's current school, preferably in writing, that you are withdrawing them to homeschool or enroll in an online school. Your child's school may have a withdrawal form that needs to be signed. You may also choose to write a letter to the school stating your intent to homeschool, but this is not mandatory. The key point is to make sure your child's current school knows they will not be showing up for class so that they are not reported missing or truant.

You may begin homeschooling after you have organized your homeschool program or enrolled your child in an online school and have withdrawn your child from their current school. There are no other forms, licenses, approvals, etc. that are required.

#### [How is truancy handled for homeschool students?](#)

##### [For Homeschool Parents/Guardians](#)

Truancy investigations happen if someone reports you to your Regional Office of Education or Intermediate Service Center. The details provided in the report will be considered, and a truancy officer may attempt to contact you for more information.

##### [For Concerned Citizens](#)

If you have concerns that a homeschool student is not receiving education, often called "educational neglect," please contact your Regional Office of Education or Intermediate Service Center to make a

report. If you are concerned for the safety or well-being of a homeschool student, please contact the [Department of Children and Family Services](#).

View [contact information for your Regional Office of Education](#) on the IARSS website.

### Materials, resources, and online schools

The most important thing to keep in mind if you decided to homeschool in Illinois is that you will be responsible for all of the tasks that would normally be divided up among several people in a school. You will become the math teacher, science teacher, principal, coach, guidance counselor, etc. As a result, you have the responsibility for planning lessons, assigning homework, grading, setting learning objectives, assessing students for promotion to the next grade, and more.

Fortunately, there are many private online schools available today that will do most, if not all, of this work for you. However, these services do come with a cost. If you decide to pay for an online school, check our resources page for a list of questions to consider asking.

There is a wealth of free and paid material available if you are looking to develop your homeschool program from scratch. Keep in mind that ISBE does not provide recommendations or review homeschool programs. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent or guardian to find, evaluate, and organize these materials into an education program.

### Does Illinois offer a free online public school option like other states?

No, at this time there is no free online public school option, unlike what is available in some other states. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide a full educational program that includes the required subjects.

### What resources can the Illinois State Board of Education recommend?

Our agency cannot recommend a specific set of educational materials or online school. However, we can provide a list of resources for parents/guardians to begin exploring. These materials range in price, quality, and content, and it is the responsibility of the parent to research and ultimately choose the best options for their student.

Keep in mind that the resources listed below are not affiliated with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and do not represent the educational views or philosophy of the agency. Their inclusion should not be taken as an endorsement or recommendation to use their services or materials.

- [Homeschool Resource List](#)

### Is my local public school required to share materials?

No, public schools are under no obligation to share materials or educational resources with a homeschool program. However, your school may be willing to provide information or resources. It might

be helpful to ask about specific materials, such as a third-grade math book, as opposed to asking for recommendations for an entire educational program.

### [Public school participation, classes, special ed services, and re-enrolling](#)

When a student exits the public school system to enroll in a homeschool program, they lose access to many, if not all, of the services, opportunities, and programs -- both inside and outside of the school. In Illinois, a homeschool student is considered to be attending a private school. Your local public school has very little obligation to provide help and support to you, which is similar to the situation you would face with a physical brick-and-mortar private school that might be located in your town.

Can my child take classes at their local public school?

#### [General Education Students](#)

Yes. [Per 105 ILCS 5/10-20.24](#), students may attend their local public school part time under the following conditions:

- The request was made by May 1 of the **previous** school year.
- There is enough space available in the school.
- The child lives within the attendance zone of the school.

#### [Special Education Students](#)

The School Code does permit private school students who are eligible to receive special education services to attend a public school on a part-time basis. (See Section 14-6.01 of the School Code.) Students who are eligible to receive special education may attend public schools in their districts of residence and receive services through an Individual Education Program (IEP) offered by the district. Students must attend the public schools for a minimum of one instructional subject to qualify for an IEP. Students who meet this requirement are eligible to receive IEP services to the extent they are actually in attendance in the public school setting. However, parents should realize that the services their children may receive may not be to the same extent as if they were full-time public school students.

#### [Driver's Education](#)

Yes. Illinois school law requires that school districts teaching Grades 9 through 12 shall provide the classroom course and driving portion of driver's education to eligible homeschooled students in the district. A student is eligible under the following conditions set forth in the School Code (Sections 27-24.2 and 27-24.4):

- The parent or guardian of the homeschooled student must notify the local public district by April 1 of the name of the homeschooled student who wishes to take the driver's education course during the next school year.
- The parent or guardian of the homeschooled student must provide evidence to the public school that the student has received a passing grade in at least eight courses during the previous two semesters.

Can my child participate in extracurricular activities or sports at their local public school?

#### [Extracurricular Activities](#)

In general, no. Public schools have no obligation to make extracurricular activities open to students who are being homeschooled. There is, however, one exception in the case of a student attending a public school part time who is enrolled in a course that **requires** an extracurricular component. For example, a

homeschooled student enrolled in band at a local public school would be allowed to attend band practice after school **if after-school practice was a required part of the course.**

### Sports

In most cases, no. Many Illinois public elementary and high schools belong to interscholastic sports organizations (e.g., the Illinois Elementary School Association or the Illinois High School Association). Both organizations have specific bylaws that limit the conditions under which homeschooled students may participate in interscholastic athletics. Please see the links below for more information.

- [Illinois Elementary School Association](#)
- [Illinois High School Association](#)

### Will my child still receive special education services?

Your child may be able to receive limited services from their local public school while being homeschooled. However, federal law specifies that districts are only required to spend a portion of their federal special education funds on students with disabilities in private school. This sum, which is called “proportionate share,” is usually much smaller than the overall funding a district can spend on students with disabilities within the public schools. In addition, a district can choose to end services for the rest of the school year when proportionate share funds run out during that year.

Unlike students in public schools, students with disabilities in private schools/homeschooling are not entitled to an IEP. Instead, districts will often provide an Individual Services Plan (ISP) to students with disabilities who will be receiving services from the school district during the school year. An ISP is a much less detailed document that often will only describe the types of service being provided, the frequency of the services, and the location where those services will be provided. If appropriate, the district might also add a goal or short-term objective, but this is not required in all cases.

A parent should contact the administrative offices of the district where the private school/homeschool is located to find out what kinds of service a school district will be providing to private school/homeschool students. District administration will be able to provide parents with an outline of the services, as well as information on how to contact the district about the Child Find and Evaluation process.

In addition, the district may periodically invite parents to attend “Timely and Meaningful Consultation” meetings, sometimes simply called TMC. Such a meeting is required to take place in every district in which a private school/homeschool student is living throughout Illinois. The meeting is typically held annually (although districts can conduct them more frequently if they choose or if circumstances might require an additional meeting). TMC meetings must, under federal rules, involve representatives of the private school/homeschool, as well as “parent representatives” of private school parents and students. These meetings will typically outline the amount of “proportionate share” funding the district has for the school year, as well as the types of service the district plans on providing during the year.

Parents of private school/homeschooled students have limited grounds to file complaints with ISBE or to request a due process hearing. Federal rules state that a parent of a private school/homeschooled student who wishes to file a complaint is limited to filing a complaint regarding the district’s conduct of the TMC process. Federal rules also limit the grounds on which parents can file for due process. Under these rules, parents may only file for due process to challenge a district’s decision either to find (or not find) a student eligible for special education services of any kind. (See “Important Reminder” sidebar for

more information.) Please see [Parent Guide -Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois](#) for detailed information regarding special education in Illinois.

### Standardized testing and assessments

You are not required to administer or submit tests, homework, projects, grades, or any other materials to a school, district, or ISBE. Any assessments you choose to administer will not be reviewed by your local public school, district, or ISBE.

Also keep in mind that homeschool students may not take the state accountability tests used in public schools.

The purpose of the state accountability tests is to measure how well public schools in Illinois are meeting the Illinois Learning Standards. Homeschools may not follow the same learning standards; therefore, the state accountability tests would not be an accurate measure of academic achievement for these students.

Please see here for some of the [possible options if you wish to administer an achievement test](#).

### Grade progression, graduation, diplomas, and transcripts

How do I know when my student is ready to graduate or move to the next grade level?

You are the administrator of your homeschool, so you will have to make this decision. ISBE does not provide guidance or recommendations for instructing and evaluating students in homeschool programs.

You should be aware that you do have freedom to decide grade level progression and graduation requirements, but employers, the military, vocational and trade schools, and colleges and universities may have course requirements. We encourage you to design your homeschool curriculum to meet the requirements of the employer, school, or organization that you will be applying to after graduation.

The Illinois Common Core Learning Standards used in public schools are available for review [here](#). These standards represent the skills students should master at each level in the public school system and may be of help to you in planning your homeschool program.

Can a homeschool student enroll in their local public school in 12<sup>th</sup> grade and receive a diploma from that school?

Yes, but keep the following important points in mind because this will require careful planning and communication with your local public school:

- A high school may not grant credit for classes that did not come from an accredited program.
  - Please note that ISBE does not accredit programs. We recommend you contact the school/program directly to determine if it is accredited.
- Some high school districts have strict limits on the number of credits from even an accredited online school that can be transferred in to count toward a student's graduation.
- A child who enrolls in a public school must then meet all of the state graduation requirements in order to graduate.

Can my child participate in the eighth- or 12<sup>th</sup>-grade graduation ceremony at their local public school?

No. Since your student is being homeschooled, the student has no legal right to participate in public school graduation ceremonies or receive a diploma. A student must be enrolled full time at a public

district and satisfy all graduation requirements to be eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies and receive a diploma.

### AP classes, SAT, and college enrollment

Can my child take Advanced Placement exams?

Yes, but there are several things parents should know.

1. Public school districts are under no obligation to order and administer AP exams for home-schooled students. However, some public schools may still be willing to administer the exam. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to reach out to nearby AP Coordinators to find a school willing to administer the test. College Board's description of homeschooled students are those who regularly and exclusively learn through a designated homeschool; this does not apply to students whose classes at their public or private school are being offered remotely due to the pandemic.
2. Parents or guardians of home-schooled children cannot order their own AP exams independently through College Board. You must secure testing arrangements through an AP Coordinator in order to participate in the AP administration.
3. Not all AP Coordinators are associated with public schools, which means testing sites may be available at private, or parochial schools.
4. It is recommended that homeschooled students contact the AP coordinator at schools near them as early in the school year as possible to determine if one of them can arrange testing for the students. This year, homeschooled students should be added to a school's exam order before November 15, 2022.
  - a. Use the [AP Course Ledger](#) to look up nearby schools where they might be able to test.
  - b. Contact the nearby schools to see if one of them can arrange testing. Students should remember that schools may have their own local deadlines and policies regarding testing outside students, particularly this year.
  - c. If the school agrees to administer exams to your child:
    - i. Ask when and where the exam will be administered.
    - ii. Let the coordinator know if your child will need special testing accommodations.
5. Please see [registration information from College Board](#) for pricing, fees, and deadlines.
6. Home-schooled students are not currently eligible to participate in [AP Capstone](#).

For more information, please see the following links:

- [AP Course Audit for Homeschool Providers](#)
- [AP Course User Guide \(PDF\)](#)
- [AP Exam Registration](#)
- [College Planning for Homeschoolers](#)

### Exam Ordering Deadline

- Homeschooled students may need more time to find a school where they will be able to take AP Exams.

Homeschooled students must be included in the school's exam order by the November 15 deadline.

If the school agrees to order and administer exams for homeschooled students, the school must take the following steps:

- Inform the students of the school's ordering deadline and of any late order fees that may apply.
- Create an **exam only section** for each exam subject being taken at your school by a homeschooled student. This year, it is recommended to create a separate exam only section for each exam subject that homeschooled students are taking at the school.
- Provide the join code for each exam only section to the students, so the students can enroll in the section in My AP.
- Review the students' information in the exam roster and order the necessary exams.
- Inform the students when and where to take the exams.
- Plan to collect and submit their exam fees.

#### How can my child take the PSAT 8/9, PSAT 10, or SAT?

The Illinois State Board of Education has contracted with College Board for the purposes of administering the PSAT 8/9, PSAT 10, and SAT with Essay School Day as the state's regular accountability assessments for high school. Home school students are not covered by ISBE's contract, as they are not considered to be public school students. The College Board reserves the dates of administration for schools established under that contract and the eligible students/grade levels served at those schools. The College Board provides materials to schools for the administrations based on the number of students registered by the State. Schools do not have the ability to order additional material and register students outside of this registration process for the spring administration.

While home school students are not eligible to participate during the state contract administrations at established schools unless they are receiving instruction from the public school in the content area(s) being assessed, there are several alternative options available for them to participate: Home school students may participate in PSAT 8/9 and PSAT 10 at schools that are not part of the state contract (e.g. private and religious schools) that order the tests with permission from those schools. Since fall testing for SAT School Day, PSAT 8/9, and PSAT/NMSQT are not a part of the state contract, home school students are able to participate in testing at their local public school, provided the school is willing to host the student and has enough personnel resources. Homeschooled students can sign up for the PSAT/NMSQT with a local school that is choosing to administer any of these tests. Students can [learn more about the PSAT/NMSQT](#) and use [the public search tool](#) to find a local school that is administering the SAT School Day, PSAT 8/9, or PSAT/NMSQT.

Students who are homeschooled must take the SAT with Essay at participating schools **only** if they are receiving instruction in English Language Arts (ELA) and/or mathematics from the public school in spring and are classified as being in grade 11 at that time. Schools must ensure these students are enrolled correctly in ISBE's Student Information System (SIS). All students have the option to register for a national administration of the SAT on a Saturday.

Lastly, students are able to create an account on Khan Academy and use the Official SAT Practice platform to prepare for the SAT. There are 8 full-length practice tests on [khanacademy.org/sat](https://khanacademy.org/sat). There are two full-length PSAT 10 practice tests on The College Board's website as well which include scoring keys and answer explanations: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/practice/full-length-practice-tests>.

How do homeschool students apply for college?

Your child will be asked to fill out an application and possibly provide supplemental materials, just like any other student. Every college is different, so you should check the websites for the colleges your child is interested in to find information specific to homeschool students. Please see the following links for more information:

- [University of Illinois Home School FAQ](#)
- [US News: How Home Schooling Affects College Admissions](#)
- [Khan Academy: What's different about applying to college as a homeschooler?](#)

### Data and research

The homeschool population is difficult to collect data on, especially in states such as Illinois that do not require any formal registration process. Still, there is some data available on homeschool students included below. It is not necessary to review the information below if you are only looking for homeschool requirements or resources.

#### Demographic data

The most reliable source of data comes from the National Center for Education Statistics. You can view the results of that organization's research on the links below or on [the NCES website](#).

- [Number of homeschool students](#)
- [Homeschool student demographics](#)
- [Reasons reported by parents for homeschooling](#)

ISBE has no information specific to Illinois on homeschool students.

#### Academic research

As noted above, it is difficult to collect data on homeschool students. That lack of data also makes it difficult to conduct high-quality research on homeschool students. Nevertheless, research does exist; the [International Center for Home Education](#) might be a good place to start your search.

### Homeschool communities

Occasionally, homeschool families will form support groups or co-ops to offer support to one another. These homeschool groups can be a useful resource for information and opportunities for socialization. You should check your neighborhood for places that homeschool families typically gather, such as libraries, museums, community centers, etc., if you are looking for a homeschool co-op. You may also be able to find homeschool communities on social media platforms, such as Facebook.