



OREGON LEGISLATIVE POLICY, RESEARCH, & COMMITTEE SERVICES

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Basics on . . .

Home schooling

What is home schooling?

For a variety of reasons, some parents prefer to educate their own children rather than send them to public or private schools. Nationally, about 1.5 million students are home schooled, according to the Home Education Research Institute, up from 300,000 in 1990. Oregon has also seen increases in the number of students schooled at home.

Oregon home schooled students are expressly excluded from the state's compulsory school attendance law (ORS 339.030). That law states that all children between the ages of 7 and 18 years who have not completed the 12th grade are required to regularly attend a public full-time school of the school district in which the child resides (ORS 339.010).

Each state allows some form of home schooling and most states regulate home schools in some manner.

What are Oregon's requirements?

Oregon requires the student's parent or guardian to notify the Education Service District (ESD) superintendent of the county in which the student lives of their plan to home school. The Superintendent, in turn, informs the student's school district superintendent. This notification must be received and acknowledged before a child is withdrawn from school.

Home schooled students are required to be assessed annually as to their academic progress. Parents may select from a list of tests approved by the State Board of Education¹. Parents must then arrange for the student to be tested by a qualified neutral person. All testing costs are the responsibility of the parent.

If, through annual testing, the Superintendent determines the child is not showing satisfactory educational progress, the child may be ordered back to public school for the remainder of the school year. This order may be appealed to the circuit court in the county of the student's residence.

"Satisfactory educational progress" means that, compared to the norming group for a test selected from the list, the student scores at or above the 15th percentile on the composite score of the test, or, if the student scores below the 15th

¹ Current administrative rule allows parents to choose from among the following tests: California Achievement Test, 1985 or 1992; Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, 1989 or 1996; Iowa Tests of Basic Skills/Tests of Achievement and Proficiency, 1985, 1988, 1992, or 1995; Metropolitan Achievement Battery, 1985 or 1992; SRA Achievement Battery, 1985; Stanford Achievement Test Battery, 1988, 1991 or 1995; and the department's statewide tests used to assess public school students.

percentile, the student's composite score is equal to or greater than the composite score of the previous year.

Failure to comply with the compulsory education requirement or failure to notify the superintendent of a parent's plan to home school a student is a Class B infraction, punishable by a fine of up to \$100.

How many Oregon students are home schooled?

The Department of Education, who maintains home schooling statistics by Education Special District (ESD), indicates that 11,682 students were home schooled during the 1997-98 school year.

Since 1988-89, all ESDs have seen an increase in the number of home schooled students. The Northwest Regional ESD, in one of the fastest growing communities in Oregon, registered 582 home schooled students in 1988, but registered 1,870 such students in 1997-98.

Are the home schooled generally young?

Department of Education statistics show that students who are home schooled include the entire 7 to 18 year-old spectrum, although there is a tapering-off once students are 14 or 15 years old or older.²

How is home schooling accomplished?

Many resources are available to parents who wish to home school. In addition to parental knowledge and home schooling books, classes are available over the Internet and television, computer educational software and commercial curriculum packages are available. Support groups exist in every state and nationally.

Why do some parents choose home schooling

According to Brian Ray, President, Home Education Research Institute, parents are motivated to home school for a number of reasons, among them are these:

- The potential for higher academic achievement due to an individualized curriculum.
- The ability for parents to teach their own value system to their children rather than the values transmitted through public schools.
- A desire for the family to spend more time together.
- A desire to avoid social contacts that may expose their children to sex, drugs, and violence.³

Proposed Legislation

During the 1997 Regular Legislative Session, legislators were asked to consider what type of regulation should be required of parents who choose to home school their children.

The Parent Education Association requested that the annual assessment requirement be replaced with a teacher's evaluation of the student (HB 3080 and SB 574). The Association questioned whether standardized assessments were an

² Lane County is an exception; its number of 14 and 15 year-old home schoolers shows an increase over younger age groups with 119 14 year-olds, 122 15 year-olds, and 112 13 year-olds.

³ Ray, Brian. *Home-schoolers score high, learn values.* Statesman Journal, Sept. 12, 1998, p. 11C.

accurate measurement of student skills, especially those with special problems, stated concerns that assessments would drive the curriculum used, and questioned the high penalty for failure (remand to public school).

HB 3080 was amended and passed both the House and Senate but died in conference committee. Similar provisions were inserted into SB 494, which was vetoed by the Governor. In his veto message, the Governor stated he had concerns with

- reducing the testing schedule from yearly tests to tests in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10;
- relaxing assessment standards by requiring no written assessment of disabled students if the assessor had two years teaching experience in any venue; and
- putting into statute the definition of “satisfactory progress,” now determined by the State Board of Education.

Policy considerations

During the 1997 Regular Legislative Session discussion of HB 3080, other policy questions were raised.

- How should a student’s progress be measured, how often, and who defines “satisfactory progress?”
- What should be the requirements of those assessing the students?
- Should parents be required to prove their competence as teachers in some way (some states require diploma or GED)?
- Should *public* schools experience sanctions when their students do not display academic progress?
- Should students who are home schooled under the supervision of a private school fall under home school requirements or private school requirements?
- Should private school students be assessed?
- Should those who home school be forced to pay for annual tests, when they are already supporting the public school system through taxes?
- Should the Department of Education track what happened to those home schoolers who register for exemption one year, and fail to register the following year?
- Is remand to public school the appropriate sanction for failing to show academic progress?
- Should public schools be granted any additional funds to help students who have been remanded to public school and may be behind their peers academically?
- Is the penalty for failing to comply with compulsory attendance laws appropriate?

For more information

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