

For help: Email: non-public.schools@doe.k12.de.us or Call: 302-735-4140.

Welcome

Welcome to the amazing world of homeschooling in Delaware! I hope you find this homeschool journey to be rewarding and fulfilling, as well as quite challenging! You may begin to homeschool at any time during the school year— you do not need to wait for a new year to begin. Whether you are a new Delaware resident, starting out with a new Kindergartener, or removing your children from either public or private schools, hopefully this document will be helpful to you. Please note this letter is produced by a homeschool parent on a volunteer basis and is not a DOE communication, however over the course of several years, many homeschool families have found it helpful. **Note, if it is late May or later and you are not going to do school before July with an upcoming kindergartener, wait to open your homeschool until after August 1, to avoid having your school shut down for failure to report attendance.

Where Do I Get Started?

Here is the website for setting up your homeschool:
<https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3074>

What Is Required of Me?

There are only a few administrative steps required to homeschool in Delaware.

- Request to open a homeschool. The only reason you can be denied is if there are outstanding truancy issues related to your child. You only do this once.
- Open your homeschool by filling out the paperwork on the DOE website. Instructions can be found on the DOE website or below.
- Enroll each child you plan to homeschool. You may add additional children to your existing homeschool at any time in the future, provided there are no truancy issues.
- Annually, in June or July, report your attendance via the DOE website
- Annually, in mid-August or September, confirm enrollees in your homeschool via the DOE website.
- You are expected to provide a “substantially equivalent” education to that provided in the public school system. How you interpret this is up to you, as there is no state-mandated curriculum you must follow, nor any state-mandated testing of homeschoolers. There is no mandated number of school days, though 180 is a target many find convenient.

What Do I Need Before I Set Up My Homeschool?

- A Name for your homeschool. Please consider this name carefully. You will see it on College applications, School transcripts, job applications, and your child’s diploma, if you choose to create one. “I Hug Mommy All Day School” sounds delightful when they are in Kindergarten; it is less cute when applying to college or trying to get a job. “I’m Probably Better Than You” might sound a tad pretentious to a job interviewer. People use their last name, a street name, or something of personal importance to the family, or a favorite phrase, just for a few examples. Keep it simple is a rule that works well here.
- Figure out How you wish to list your children in terms of grade. There are a few considerations here. You will quickly discover that the concept of being in grade X makes no sense at all in the homeschool context. Almost no kid is at one level in every subject,

and you are not trying to keep him or her together with a cohort of 30 other unrelated kids. Also, all of our attendance and enrollment demographics are public information available on the world wide web, and providing an exact grade level provides that much more public information. Finally, kids aren't factory products moving down a line. One kid may naturally progress quickly past everything you had planned, and another might have a bumpy year with lots of unexpected medical issues, resulting in little schoolwork getting done, and need another year. Rather than fussing over the fictional ideas of "Skipping ahead" or "being held back" that make no sense in the homeschool context— a kid is just a kid working at his or her own level at home— we have another option, called "Ungraded."

Ungraded has two levels— Ungraded primary, for roughly grades K—8, and Ungraded Secondary for roughly grades 9—12. The ungraded option preserves more privacy, removes any concerns over "skipping ahead" or "holding back" and just allows the child to progress naturally through homeschooling. And most Delaware K—8 schools really do not care how your child was listed in the DOE system by you if you choose to send them back to brick and mortar school. Some will place by age, some will place by ability as shown by the work samples you provide, and some will do their own testing. There is really no downside, unless you just happen to LIKE numbered grade levels, in which case, they are an easily selectable option for you!

Where Can I See a Copy of the Delaware Homeschooling Law?

Here! In fact, Delaware homeschool law is easy to read and understand. There is no need to sign up for a paid service to give you this information or interpret it for you.

On this website you will find the primary document governing homeschool law in Delaware: <http://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/title14.pdf> note that nonpublic often refers to both private and home schools.

- Page 16 describes driver education for nonpublic schools.
- Pages 195-196 describe compulsory education laws and regulations
- Pages 196-197 define homeschooling, and describe our reporting requirements
- Pages 236-238 describe the SEED college scholarship program, which includes homeschoolers
- Pages 238-240 describe the INSPIRE college scholarship program
- Pages 241-243 describe the Delaware Advance college Scholarship program
- Athletics are also described, but the upshot is— homeschoolers are not eligible to participate in teams run by public or private schools.

Please note that the DOE website also has links to a descriptive version of the state statutes, but it is out of date, and refers to a homeschooling option (homeschooling under supervision of the local schools) that no longer exists in Delaware. However it is written in even more clear language than the above statues.

I Opened My School! Now What?

Congratulations! If you have a new Kindergartener or have just moved to Delaware from out of state and have already unenrolled your student from your old home, you are all set and have nothing more to do— get started homeschooling! If you have a child already enrolled in Delaware schools who will now be homeschooling, print the letter that generated in your account with the DOE (you can log back in and get it) and take that letter to the front office of your

child's school within five days of opening your homeschool. From an administrative standpoint, that's all there is to it until it's time to report attendance in July! Good luck!

Frequently Asked Questions:

I want to homeschool my preschooler! Where do I sign up?

You have no paperwork or reporting requirements until your child is of mandatory reporting age. Please look around on the Facebook groups Homeschool Delaware, Delaware Secular Homeschoolers, and various field trip and nearby homeschool groups for activities that might be appropriate for your age children. You do not need anyone's permission to teach or work with your own child!

Someone at the school told me I cannot homeschool, because my child has special needs! I was told I must have a special teaching certificate! Is this correct?

NO! Both of these statements are incorrect! In Delaware you may freely homeschool your special needs child, and in fact, many special needs children thrive in the homeschool environment. No teaching certification is necessary (do you need a certification to parent your child? No.) Firmly tell the school they are misinformed. Or tell them nothing— you do not require their permission to homeschool; you need only follow the steps above to open your school, then take the letter to the front office of the school. If they cause difficulty, give them the phone number above and have the school talk to the homeschool liaisons at the DOE, who will educate them. You do not need to fight with the school about this. DO consider carefully whether you prepared to meet your child's educational, therapeutic, and emotional needs on a full-time basis, however. Understand the school will probably no longer provide any services your child is currently receiving, and you may have to pay to have those services provided privately.

I was told I must register at my local school district FIRST, then try to open my homeschool!

False. You are not required to do this. Please call the homeschool liaisons and give them the name and contact information of the person giving you this information, or refer them to the statute linked above and ask them to find that regulation.

If I homeschool, does the State of Delaware issue my child's diploma? Is a GED required?

No. You, the parent issue a completely valid homeschool diploma upon graduation. It is highly recommended that you keep some writing samples, pages from a lab notebook, math work, and a list of texts and syllabi used during high school. Many places will not ask for these, but some colleges or employers might, because we do not have anyone validating our work. Your student should also not be forced to take a GED in most cases, as the GED is a test for students who failed to graduate from high school, and your student will be a high school graduate; the GED is therefore an inappropriate test. There might be a few trade schools or employers who request it— what you do is up to you, although I recommend educating them first about homeschool law in Delaware and that your graduate met all requirements.

Do homeschoolers in Delaware need to be tested?

No. Delaware homeschoolers cannot take state public school tests. Other tests (Stanford, IOWA, CAT, SAT 7/8, etc) are optional and at your own expense. Do consider whether

familiarity with testing will be helpful to your student if he or she needs to take a college or employment or military entrance exam. Most colleges will require an ACT or the SAT plus two SAT subject tests from homeschoolers, even if they are otherwise test-optional.

Can I put my child back into school if we have regrets or life changes?

Yes. It is easiest to transition back to school prior to high school. Many families find 8th grade a good time for a student to re-acclimate to the school environment before entering high school. Once high school starts, you should feel pretty committed to homeschooling, as high schools are not obligated to accept your homeschool credits.

Do I need to buy or join an accredited program?

That is a personal decision only you can make. Most homeschoolers find this to be a waste of money, and have much success with college applications and beyond without doing so. Other homeschoolers find accredited programs to be comforting and helpful. Be aware that some accreditation agencies are not very well respected, so please do your homework before spending money.

Do I need to join a co-op or umbrella school?

That is a personal decision only you can make. You do not need to do so— it is not a requirement— and many Delaware homeschoolers are successful post-graduation without doing so. However, many homeschoolers find it helpful to have someone keep them on track, or to have a group that routinely offers classes they don't feel comfortable overseeing for themselves, or like a particular religious affiliation associated with an umbrella. Investigate the group thoroughly, understand their world view and how it interacts with your own, and how all of the finances and expectations work on both sides of the equation. If the group makes promises, find out what their qualifications are to fulfill these promises.

I hear that Social Services is just PANTING to take away my newly homeschooled kids and that I must join a protection organization to make sure this doesn't happen. Is this true?

No. You are of course free to join any organization you wish if the organization provides something you desire. One great thing about Delaware's small size is that the lawmakers are our neighbors and friends, and some are even homeschoolers— and many know homeschoolers since there are so many of us. When issues arise, we are often able to work them out face to face with those who have concerns and get things settled down pretty quickly without interference from outsiders who do not necessarily represent the interests of the broader Delaware homeschool community. It is also a fact that homeschooling itself is no longer an unusual thing to do, so without other concerning factors, it is very unlikely to earn the interest of already overworked social workers. If you wish to investigate any organization for membership, pay close attention to their religious and political agendas and make sure you understand whether they align with your concerns and feelings. Many use marketing materials specifically geared to make you feel fearful so that you feel a need to join them, just as most companies try to create a need for their product; it's just business. If it brings you peace of mind, go for it. Or use the money to sign up for a gym class or art lessons.

Who makes my child's report cards and transcripts and diploma?

You do! There are templates in the files section! You won't need many report cards.