

Home Education: *Getting Started*

Provided by:

Parents
Educating
on the
Treasure
Coast



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Disclaimer: *This guide is intended to serve as an aid in beginning and continuing your home education program. Parents ETC makes no claims, promises or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the contents of this document and expressly disclaims liability for errors and omissions in its content. Ultimately, the parent/guardian is responsible for knowing and abiding by all applicable law with respect to their own home education program.*

Relevant Sections of Florida Law

2009 Florida Statutes: Title XLVIII, Chapter 1003.21

(1)(a)1. All children who have attained the age of 6 years or who will have attained the age of 6 years by February 1 of any school year or who are older than 6 years of age but who have not attained the age of 16 years, except as otherwise provided, are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term.

2009 Florida Statutes: Title XLVIII, Chapter 1002.41

(1) A "home education program" is defined in s. [1002.01](#). The parent is not required to hold a valid regular Florida teaching certificate.

(a) The parent shall notify the district school superintendent of the county in which the parent resides of her or his intent to establish and maintain a home education program. The notice shall be in writing, signed by the parent, and shall include the names, addresses, and birthdates of all children who shall be enrolled as students in the home education program. The notice shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days of the establishment of the home education program. A written notice of termination of the home education program shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days after said termination.

(b) The parent shall maintain a portfolio of records and materials. The portfolio shall consist of the following:

1. A log of educational activities that is made contemporaneously with the instruction and that designates by title any reading materials used.
2. Samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student. The portfolio shall be preserved by the parent for 2 years and shall be made available for inspection by the district school superintendent, or the district school superintendent's agent, upon 15 days' written notice. Nothing in this section shall require the district school superintendent to inspect the portfolio.

(c) The parent shall provide for an annual educational evaluation in which is documented the student's demonstration of educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability. The parent shall select the method of evaluation and shall file a copy of the evaluation annually with the district school superintendent's office in the county in which the student resides. The annual educational evaluation shall consist of one of the following:

1. A teacher selected by the parent shall evaluate the student's educational progress upon review of the portfolio and discussion with the student. Such teacher shall hold a valid

- regular Florida certificate to teach academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level;
2. The student shall take any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;
 3. The student shall take 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;
 4. The student shall be evaluated by an individual holding a valid, active license pursuant to the provisions of s. 490.003(7) or (8); or
 5. The student shall be evaluated with any other valid measurement tool as mutually agreed upon by the district school superintendent of the district in which the student resides and the student's parent.

(2) The district school superintendent shall review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation of the student in a home education program. If the student does not demonstrate educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability, the district school superintendent shall notify the parent, in writing, that such progress has not been achieved. The parent shall have 1 year from the date of receipt of the written notification to provide remedial instruction to the student. At the end of the 1-year probationary period, the student shall be reevaluated as specified in paragraph (1)(c). Continuation in a home education program shall be contingent upon the student demonstrating educational progress commensurate with her or his ability at the end of the probationary period.

(3) A home education program shall be excluded from meeting the requirements of a school day.

(4) Home education students may participate in interscholastic extracurricular student activities in accordance with the provisions of s. 1006.15.

(5) Home education students may participate in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program in accordance with the provisions of ss. 1009.53-1009.539.

(6) Home education students may participate in dual enrollment programs in accordance with the provisions of ss. 1007.27(4) and 1007.271(10).

(7) Home education students are eligible for admission to community colleges in accordance with the provisions of s. 1007.263.

(8) Home education students are eligible for admission to state universities in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the Board of Governors.

(9) Home education program students may receive testing and evaluation services at diagnostic and resource centers, in accordance with the provisions of s. 1006.03.

Responsibilities of Homeschool Parents

1. File a letter of intent to homeschool, (example included in packet). This letter must be mailed or hand-delivered within 30 days of establishing your home education program. As this is entirely the responsibility of the home educator, it is suggested that this letter be mailed certified, return-receipt requested.
2. Maintain a portfolio of records consisting of samples of student's work and a log of educational activities, which would also include a reading log.
3. Make your portfolio available for inspection by the superintendent upon 15 days written notice.
4. Submit an annual evaluation for each child to the superintendent on or before the anniversary date of establishing your home education program.
5. Preserve your child's portfolio for two years.
6. Within 30 days of completion or termination of your home education program submit a letter of termination to the school district office.

Maintaining a Portfolio

Your portfolio is simply a record of your child's learning activities. According to Florida law, this record will contain "a log of educational activities which is made contemporaneously with the instruction and which designates by title any reading material used" and "samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks or creative materials used or developed by the student". In other words, your portfolio must contain two parts:

Part one will include a log of activities and a reading and/or curriculum list. This log can be written in any manner that is comfortable for you. Some parents report writing daily activities on a calendar or using a lesson plan book is the simplest way to record their child's learning activities. Other parents use journaling or have older students record their completed tasks in a spiral binder. . Regardless of the method you choose, this record should be kept up-to-date. The reading or curriculum list can include any materials used in your home education program. Library books, textbooks, websites, and brochures or pamphlets from educational field trips are just some examples of reading materials. This list may be kept along with your record of daily activities or as a separate log. Remember to record the title of the material and when it was used.

Part two of your log will contain samples of your child's activities. These samples could be completed pages from workbooks, games or activities developed by your child in the course of his/her activities, copies of grade book pages from online or computer learning programs, sports trophies, 4-H record books, scouting patches, or pictures of completed projects.

You may store your log of activities, reading list and sample of work in any manner that is comfortable for you. Some parents use storage boxes where they save everything from workbook pages to completed projects. Others use file folders and even scrapbooks. Many parents tell us that using a three ring binder has proved to be a very simple and efficient way to store records. Remember to include pictures of field trips or projects your children make.

Regardless of your own personal method of record keeping, be sure to keep it simple, easy to locate, and up-to-date.

A word about attendance

According to Florida Statute 1002.41, home educators are not required to keep attendance or meet "the requirements of a school day as defined in statute 1002.01". In other words, home educators are not required to teach any particular subjects or keep a record of attendance. Your child's portfolio is the only record required of your home education program.

Making Your Portfolio Available

According to Florida law, your child's portfolio must be *“available for inspection by the superintendent or the superintendent's agent upon 15 days written notice”*. Any such inspection only discerns whether or not the portfolio is legal. It does not serve as an evaluation of your child's academic performance or your skills as a home educator.

Submit an Annual Evaluation

Florida law requires home educators to submit an annual evaluation. This requirement is your responsibility therefore it is suggested that mailed evaluations be sent certified mail, return-receipt request. Your child's annual evaluation is due on or before the anniversary date of your home education program.

Home educators may choose from the following five evaluation options:

1. Individual evaluation by a Florida certified teacher. Should you choose this option, you may use the form found in this packet.
2. A nationally-normed Student Achievement Test, also known as standardized or achievement tests.
3. A State Student Assessment Test. In Florida this test is known as the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, (FCAT) or the High School Competency Test, (HSCT).
4. Psychological Evaluation
5. Superintendent/Parent Agreement

Preserving Your Child's Portfolio

According to Florida law, “the portfolio shall be preserved by the parent for two years”

Submit a Letter of Termination

At some point in your home education program it will become necessary to submit a letter of termination. If you move to a different school district, enroll your child in public or private school or graduate your child, you must satisfy this responsibility.

A sample letter of termination is found in this packet. It is suggested that this letter be sent via certified mail, return-receipt requested so that you will have proof of your legal compliance.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ESTABLISH A HOME EDUCATION PROGRAM

(St. Lucie County)

Date: _____

Superintendent of Schools
St. Lucie County School District
Student Services Office – Home Education
4204 Okeechobee Road
Fort Pierce, FL 34947

This letter is to inform you that I intend to establish a home education program for the following child(ren) beginning on _____.

CHILD’S NAME

DATE OF BIRTH

Parent/Guardian’s Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ESTABLISH A HOME EDUCATION PROGRAM

(Martin County)

Date: _____

Superintendent of Schools
Martin County School District
Student Services Office – Home Education
500 East Ocean Blvd
Stuart, FL 34994

This letter is to inform you that I intend to establish a home education program for the following child(ren) beginning on _____.

CHILD’S NAME

DATE OF BIRTH

Parent/Guardian’s Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

Annual Home Education Evaluation Form

Evaluation Date: _____

Student's Name: _____

Student's Date of Birth: _____

Student's Address: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

I have evaluated the above named student in accordance with Florida Statute 1002.41 and find that he/she has demonstrated progress at a level commensurate with his/her ability.

Teacher/Evaluator Signature: _____

Letter of Termination of Home Education Program
(St. Lucie County)

Date: _____

Superintendent of Schools
St. Lucie County School District
Student Services Office – Home Education
4204 Okeechobee Road
Fort Pierce, FL 34947

My child's home education program will terminate on _____.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

Child's Name: _____

Child's Date of Birth: _____

Child's Address: _____

Letter of Termination of Home Education Program (Martin County)

Date: _____

Superintendent of Schools
St. Lucie County School District
Student Services Office – Home Education
500 East Ocean Blvd
Stuart, FL 34994

My child's home education program will terminate on _____.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

Child's Name: _____

Child's Date of Birth: _____

Child's Address: _____

Advice and Tips From Other Home Educators

The best advice I received when I began to homeschool was to teach my children how to learn. Most parents feel like that can't homeschool because they may not know all the information taught in the curriculum. What do we do as adults when we don't know something? We ask someone who knows or we do research, etc. This is the most important skill I have taught my kids. What I've learned is that if they know how to find the answers themselves they will have greater success.

J.W. from Ft Pierce

Before buying a curriculum do some research. Look online for reviews and talk to other homeschool parents. Don't be afraid to ask other's opinions about a particular program, class or curriculum.

C. M. from Pt St Lucie

Home education does not have to follow the same school hours or calendar as the public school system.

C. M. from Pt St Lucie

Use the internet to check reviews for curriculum and homeschool methods. The library is has good information on homeschooling. Use your research to avoid programs and methods that just look or sound good.

M. H. from Ft Pierce

Relax and have fun with your child.

D. L. from Ft Pierce

Find a support group immediately and get involved.

S. J. from Martin County

Look for clues and ask your child what he wants to learn about and then study it.

J. S. from Port St Lucie

You are not alone. Don't even try to do this alone. You don't have to be out of the house everyday, running your child here and there, but you don't want to sit home, just you and your child schooling alone. Find a support group that fits you and your child. Join it; support it by volunteering to do something. You will find the help, support and friendship you need to get you through this wonderful, tremendous and at times, stressful journey. In the end you will find that it is all worth it.

S. R. from Port St Lucie

If your student is showing mastery of a skill or task, move on. It is not necessary to finish every problem or the entire book.

C. M. from Pt St Lucie

All learning does not have to come from a textbook. Nature, hobbies, sports, service projects and volunteering can all be sources of education.

R. J. from Ft. Pierce

Find out how your child best learns and teach to that strength. Don't use online classes for children who struggle using the computer. If your child needs a quiet place to study, find an area where he/she can work in silence. If your child loves the outdoors then school outside whenever it is possible.

S. G. from Ft Pierce

You CAN do this! You don't have to know everything. Teacher's Manuals are wonderful books!

S. R. from Port St Lucie