

Getting Started in Homeschooling

Presented by



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What is CHEF of Louisiana?

Christian Home Educators Fellowship (CHEF) of Louisiana, Inc. is an organization comprised of Christian homeschool support groups from around the state. This gives CHEF of Louisiana an effective membership of hundreds of families without competing with local support groups for members. The unique relationship CHEF of Louisiana has with local support groups offers each home school family the comprehensive, unified and affordable support it needs at local and state levels.

CHEF of Louisiana's purpose is to:

CHEF of Louisiana is organized exclusively for the purpose of providing services and support to Christian home education families including, but not limited to, the following ways:

1) *Provide timely national and state news.* State organizations have become point-of-contact for most national home education service organizations, such as the National Center for Home Education and the Home School Legal Defense Association. These organizations depend on the state organizations to inform families in their states of legislation, court cases, and other events that influence the future of home education.

2) *Keep watch on state bills and laws and regulations that affects homeschoolers.* CHEF of Louisiana maintains a watchful eye on the state legislature, state agencies and the news media through our Legislative Liaison.

3) *Assist in the formation of new home education support groups* and provide a network of communication between the groups.

4) *Direct new families to a group in their area* and inform them of current home study law.

5) *Support home education research* to reinforce to the community that home schooling is a viable method of education.

6) *Provide training for support group leaders* to strengthen local support groups.

7) *Educate the public about home education* and thus improve acceptance in the community.

8) *Provide a state newsletter with current Louisiana home education news.*

9) *Sponsor the Annual CHEF of Louisiana State Convention and Book Fair.*

Why is a network of support groups so important?

We live in an age of information and change, and much of this change challenges the very existence of the family. Such a network provides home educators with the information needed to influence the changes occurring in our nation and in our state. If we are not involved, the laws will change and home schooling and family life as we know it will be a thing of the past. In addition, if needed, a well-organized support group can quickly respond to any adverse legislation by calling, writing or emailing local, state, or national governmental officials. State organizations can also be helpful because their larger size gives them access to greater resources than local groups. This is true on both an informational and political level.

How does a support group become a member of CHEF of Louisiana?

Upon request, CHEF of Louisiana will send your support group leader information and membership application forms. The support group's leadership must sign the applications stating that it adheres to CHEF of Louisiana's statement of faith, statement on education and by-laws. CHEF of Louisiana votes to receive new member groups twice a year at the annual CHEF of Louisiana Convention and at the annual Leadership Conference.

How do homeschool support groups form?

Home school support groups form in many ways. Some have formed when families meet at the park or the zoo during the day. Some have decided it is easier to form a support group closer to home rather than commuting across town or to another city. Others may meet at their local church.

It doesn't take a large number of families to start a group: some support groups begin with as few as three families. Lack of experience should not prevent anyone from starting a group. CHEF of Louisiana can provide assistance to anyone interested in forming a new support group.

Join the Home School Legal Defense Association to receive your own legal protection as well as to support home education in our state and throughout the country. Even if you never use their services, your money would be put to good use. Any family involved in a court case represents all homeschoolers in that state and possibly even nationwide, as an unfavorable ruling would have an adverse effect for others. Likewise, a favorable ruling is of benefit to all homeschoolers.

History of Louisiana Home Study Law

This is a transcript of a talk that state Representative "Woody" Jenkins gave at the Annual CHEF of Louisiana Leadership Seminar on November 3, 1990 in Lafayette:

I want to congratulate you for your decision to educate your children at home. That is a decision which people usually arrive at after a great deal of thought. They have considered the more conventional alternatives and determined that for them and their children this is the best. They find that home education involves a great deal of work and effort, far more than they anticipated. But, people have also found that it is very rewarding; not only from an educational standpoint, but, from the standpoint of values that it instills in the children.

Home education has been legal in Louisiana since 1980. Early in that year, I was reading a newspaper, and saw that a couple had been arrested for teaching their children at home. I was really shocked. It said that they actually had a small school at their home; teaching their children in it. But, they were being prosecuted because their school did not meet the definition of "school" under Louisiana law. At the same time, I found that many of the private schools around the state did not meet that definition: a place with adequate physical facilities, at least 50 pupils, and teachers who were certified by the state.

We began drafting a statute to redefine what a school was for purposes of Louisiana law. We came up with the definition that said a school was a place with adequate facilities, pupils, and teachers. Our draft took out any reference to the number of pupils. We said the teachers would have to be state certified if the school received government funds. But, if the school did not receive government funds, the teachers would have such qualifications as determined by the church or organization operating the school. When Hazel Anderson of New Orleans heard about the first draft of the bill, she

called me. In her sweet and persistent manner, she said that this was not adequate. She believed that we really needed to have an explicit recognition of home education in the statute. Well, I agreed to put language in the bill, recognizing that a home education program approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education would satisfy the law for purposes of attendance at a school.

So, the Louisiana Private Education Deregulation Act was introduced into the legislature. I was a member of the House Education Committee at that time. A lot of pastors got involved in supporting the bill. They were in it to protect Christian schools; there were only a few people interested in home education. At the time, I thought, "someday there might be ten to twenty people in Louisiana interested in home education, but not very many." We went to the committee for the first hearing on the bill. I knew the vote going in, that it was supposed to be fourteen to two against. Every public education group in the state was there to oppose it. We presented our testimony; many of the pastors were outside praying for the committee members. Then, low and behold, when the vote was taken, it was fourteen to two for the bill. This was amazing! The bill was sent to the floor. The word spread, "these evangelical fundamentalists had conspired to send a bill to the floor to allow people to do anything - take their kids out of school or whatever." In everyone's minds, the bill was going nowhere. Yet, when the bill came up for debate on the House floor, no one spoke against it; the bill passed out of the house ninety-nine to one! I guess some of the House members thought, "We'll go ahead and pass this thing out and the Senate will kill it." Well, the Senate passed it, but, only after inserting the certified teachers requirement. So when the Senate version came back to the House, I asked the House to reject that version and send it to conference committee. This committee has the power to agree to a version that is acceptable to them; then they sign off on that and send it back to the House and Senate for approval. Then, it goes to the Governor's desk to be signed into law. If you cannot get a

majority on the conference committee, the bill is dead.

We had to get this conference committee to agree. But, of the six members of the committee, the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) had a lock on three of them. They were strongly opposed to anything like this. The bill appeared to be dead. It was the last night of the session. I was in the Senate working on one of the senators trying to switch his position, when all of a sudden, the vice president of the AFL-CIO called me over to the side. (Remember, the pastors were outside praying.) He said, "Woody, we've decided that we are going to withdraw our opposition to your bill." Hallelujah! Within a few minutes, every senator and representative on the committees had signed that report. It went to the House and Senate and was passed by both bodies, and before midnight it was on Governor Dave Treen's desk. He signed the bill, making it law. Since then, we have had, I suppose, thousands of children educated at home schools.

As I have served my tenure in the legislature, the Private Education Deregulation Act of 1980, which freed private schools and legalized home education, is among the things that I am most proud of. Of course, the only thing the legislature did was unshackle people. The accomplishments of the past ten years have come from the people who used that freedom.

I want to caution you, though. These rights that people have won can be lost. It can happen in a matter of days. A bill can be introduced; and, on the fifth day after, it can be headed to the Governor. Bills can be amended, too. They can have a bill that deals with the education subject (not with home education) and an amendment can be tacked on it in committee. If you are not there, it is going to be like a freight train rolling through the capitol. Our opponents will have their people showing up, because when you are promoting a bill, you can tell your people three weeks in advance. But, when you are in opposition, you may not know in advance

when a bill is coming up until just hours before. Such a challenge may not come up this year. But, it could happen any time, so we have to be prepared. One of the dangers of home education is that you can allow yourself to be cut off from what's happening in the world. So, please be alert with what is happening in the world. Be part of a network that can protect your rights.

Yes, you have a responsibility to be a guardian of the rights of others. There are bills that can be introduced that could not only exclude home education, but also other related rights just as critical. Take away those rights, and your rights will be next. Don't think that it's only YOU. That everything zeroes in on YOU, and if everything is OK with YOU, then everything is OK. Ultimately, those opposed to your values will get to you if you are not involved. Help defend the rights of future generations. Shouldn't they have the same rights? We are the guardians of their rights. We have been blessed by having all these liberties passed on to us. We have the responsibility to pass those liberties on to the next generation as well.

Home Education in Louisiana

Is Louisiana law favorable to home education?

Yes, Louisiana law is favorable to home education. Two options are available:

1. Home Study Program
2. Private School Option

Our constitutional liberty is protected by the Private Education Deregulation Act (Act No. 828, Section 236 of Title 17 of Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950). However, as with all freedoms, it must be guarded. Although homeschooling has been recognized since 1980, attempts have been made to repeal that act or chip away at this right. (See "*History of Louisiana Home Study Law*" in this pamphlet.)

Who may home educate?

Any parent may home educate his/her child. A parent's constitutional right to home educate comes from the fundamental constitutional principle of the freedom of parents to direct the education of their children. Parents with religious convictions also have the right to home educate as a free exercise of religion. These provisions are in the Louisiana State Constitution, as well as the United States Constitution.

When can home education begin?

Home education may begin at any time during the school year, but the application form must be mailed within 15 days after the home study program begins. The law also allows parents to register with the Department of Education as a private school. Only those children affected by the

compulsory attendance law must be registered with the Department of Education. According to the Compulsory Attendance Law (*Louisiana R.S. 17:221A*), all children from the 7th birthday to their 18th birthday must be in school as well as any child who has not turned 7, but who was previously enrolled in the public school system.

Registration under the Home Study Program:

When home educating under this option, an initial application must be made within 15 days after the beginning of the home study program. Initial applications must include a certified copy of the child's birth certificate. (A clear photocopy may be sent if the notary seal is readable. When the child is 11 years old, the parent must submit evidence that the child has been vaccinated against meningococcal disease unless they have a waiver for religious, personal or medical reasons. The Department of Education is not responsible for lost or damaged birth certificates.) You may apply directly on the Department of La website at www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/home-study or send the application by "certified, return receipt" mail to: SBESE-Approved Home Study Program, Louisiana Department of Education, P. O. Box 94064, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064. *Note: Parents are responsible for submitting registration materials to the Department of Education. CHEF of Louisiana does **not** submit these materials.*

Students enrolled in a SBESE-Approved Home Study Program may participate in interscholastic athletic activities at a public or state approved private school that is also a member of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association. Participation at a private school is allowed at the sole discretion of the administration of that school. (R.S. 236.3) *Note: This does **not** apply to home educated students enrolled under the Private School Option.*

Home Education under the Private School Law:

When opting to home educate under the Private School Law, *do not* send the "Application for Home Study Program" form. Instead, send a letter to the State Superintendent of Schools informing him that you have established a private school. Write the letter on your school letterhead. Include the following information:

- Number of pupils of compulsory attendance age
- Date your school starts
- Number of school days per school year

Refer to the sample letter on page 18. You may also inform the Department of Education by going to their website and choosing to register your homeschool as a nonpublic school.

[http://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/nonpublic-schools/registered-nonpublic-schools-\(not-seeking-state-approval\)](http://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/nonpublic-schools/registered-nonpublic-schools-(not-seeking-state-approval))

The written notification should be sent within thirty days of the beginning of your school year. We recommend that this notification be sent by "certified, return receipt" mail to:

Registered Nonpublic Schools
Office of Portfolio
Louisiana Department of Education
PO Box 94064
Baton Rouge, LA 70804.

*Note: Parents are responsible for submitting registration materials to the Department of Education. CHEF of Louisiana does **not** submit these materials.*

How do I withdraw my child from public school?

It is best to inform the principal of the school *in writing* that you are removing the child from school. Avoid meetings or phone

calls. Tact is required in presenting a good Christian testimony especially if a school official is not familiar with home study laws.

If you are homeschooling under the private school option, you must notify the school in writing that your child will no longer be enrolled there, but will be attending your private school. The letter must be sent within 10 days and must include the child's full legal name, birthdate, race and gender (*see sample letter on page 20*).

If you are registering under the Home Study Program, this letter is not required by law, but is highly recommended.

How do I renew my application for the Home Study Program each year?

A renewal application must be made by the first of October of the school year, or within twelve months of the approval of the *initial* application. Renewal applications are approved when parents submit satisfactory evidence that their home school offered a *sustained curriculum of a quality equal to that of the public schools at the same grade level*. This can be done in one of three ways:

1. Verification that the child has taken the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), California Achievement Test (CAT), Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), LEAP 21 or another approved standardized test and has scored at or above his grade level or has progressed at a rate equal to one grade level for each year in home study. (*See section called Testing Guide for Home Schoolers.*) A clear copy of the test results attached to the Home Study Application is sufficient.
2. A written statement from a teacher certified to teach at the child's grade level stating that the child is being taught with a sustained curriculum of quality at least

equal to that offered by public schools at that grade level, or in the case of children with mental or physical disabilities, a sustained curriculum at least equal to that offered by public schools to children with similar disabilities.

3. A packet of materials may be presented including a complete outline of the subjects taught, list of books and materials used, copies of the student's work, test results, statements by third parties who have observed the child's progress, or any other evidence of the quality of the program being offered.

Most parents choose to send in a copy of their child's test results. Whichever option you choose, proofread for spelling and grammatical errors; and be sure that all required information is included.

How do I renew for the Private School Option?

Send a letter according to the instructions given for the initial registration under the Private School Option, updating the information to reflect the new school year or renew online on their website.

How does my child finish high school education through the Home Study Program?

A diploma issued to a student graduating from a SBESE-Approved Home Study Program is, by Louisiana law, deemed by all post-secondary educational institutions, all state departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and all other state and local governmental entities to have all of the rights and privileges afforded to a diploma issued by a state approved non-public high school. (R.S. 17:236.1)

R.S. 17:11C. States that "All certificates and diplomas issued by an approved private school shall carry the same privileges

as one issued by a state public school.” At this time, there is no statute stating directly that a home study diploma is equal to a public school diploma. High school diplomas may also be earned through correspondence schools or as a satellite of another school. A student, who passes the General Educational Development (GED) test, will receive a Louisiana state equivalency diploma. (You may contact any Adult Learning Center or a local high school in your area for further information.) A private school in Louisiana may award a diploma to a student when he has met the high school requirements established by the private school.

Who is responsible for the cost, materials, planning, and documentation of the Home Study Program?

Parents are responsible for all costs, materials and record keeping. A lesson plan book, recording each day's lessons, is excellent documentation. It does not need to be extensive or complicated, but should be kept consistently. Lesson plans for several children can be listed on one week's planning page. There are many excellent resources on lesson planning specifically designed for home educators.

What materials do I use?

The decision of what materials to use is the parents'. Louisiana law requires that the curriculum must be at least equal to the quality of that offered in the public schools and must include the Declaration of Independence and the Federalist Papers. Many curriculum companies offer materials that are specifically designed for the tutorial method of teaching, as well as excellent materials preferred by private schools. The Annual CHEF of Louisiana State Convention and Book Fair is an excellent opportunity to see and learn about a wide variety of curricula first hand. It is usually held during the month of April; contact CHEF of Louisiana or your local

support group for details. A note about virtual charter schools, sometimes called, K12: CHEF of LA strongly cautions using any public-funded curriculum. For more about this, please go to the CHEF of LA website (www.chefofla.org) and look under Resource Info tab and select Virtual Charter School.

What happens if “approval” is not granted for the Home Study Program?

First, be sure all guidelines have been complied with and all documents have been submitted properly. If not, correct the errors and resubmit all documentation properly. Michael P. Farris, founder of Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), summarizes Louisiana law in his book Home Schooling and the Law as follows: "Louisiana Revised Statutes 17:236 appears on the surface to be an 'approval' type statute. However, approval by the [Department of Education] must be given, according to the terms of the statute 'if the parent certifies that the home study program...offers a sustained curriculum of quality at least equal to that offered by public schools.' Since the parental declaration must be accepted, the [state official] holds no true discretion."

What if I have trouble with the Department of Education or a truancy officer?

If you are a member of HSLDA, contact them immediately. And always contact your local support group if you have any difficulties. If an official comes to your door, be courteous; but do not let anyone into your home, unless it is a police officer with a search warrant. To avoid an uncooperative appearance, have a copy of your approved application with the State Board of Education or a copy of the private school option letter ready to show. Or you could simply present your business card from HSLDA and say “please talk to my lawyer.” All the contact information they would need is on that HSLDA

card. A folder including information such as a Statement of Faith and Education from your local support group or a copy of your support group's newsletter could also be shown.

How do I put my child back in public school?

Parents who wish to enroll their child in public or private school after home educating are responsible for all documentation. The Department of Education states in its home study guidelines that it will not offer an opinion as to the student's grade level, achievement level, or appropriate academic placement. The student will be evaluated and tested to determine the appropriate grade level or credit, even if the parent has already administered a standardized achievement test.

How can I protect our Louisiana home education laws?

1. Be involved in your local support group. Don't expect someone else to do all the work.
2. Encourage local leaders to stay in contact with CHEF of Louisiana. CHEF of Louisiana advocates the rights of home education in the state legislature. The Home School Legal Defense Association monitors legislative activity at the national level and keeps CHEF of Louisiana informed; any information relevant to Louisiana is forwarded to support group leaders through the Congressional Action Program (CAP).
3. Encourage local leadership to attend the annual CHEF of Louisiana Leadership Training Seminar, usually held the last Saturday of January.
4. Establish phone trees with specific guidelines. You can make a difference in the legislative process through phone, mail or email. Numbers do count. We can expect to see legal challenges concerning regulation of home education. The enactment of burdensome regulations is one of the tactics opponents of home education use.

SAMPLE PRIVATE SCHOOL LETTER

(Name of your school)
(Address)

(date)
**Registered Nonpublic Schools
Office of Portfolio
Louisiana Department of Education
P.O. Box 94064
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064**

Dear State Superintendent,

This is to inform you that in accordance with LA REV. Statute 17:236, (Name of your school) began classes on (Date) for the (School Year) school term of 180 days. Our total enrollment is (# of school age children you will be teaching) students.

Sincerely,

**(your signature)
(your name)**

Regarding the Sample Private School Letter

This notification regarding your school should be sent within thirty (30) days of the beginning of each school year. We recommended you send it by “certified, return receipt” mail. A copy of your letter and all receipts should be saved with your school records.

Note: If you are withdrawing your child from a **public** school to begin homeschooling under the **Private School Option**, you must also provide a written notification of enrollment to the school your child is leaving. It must include the child’s full legal name, date of birth, race and gender. This notice must be sent within ten (10) days of enrollment in your private school. (See *next page*.) If you wish, you may also request that a copy of your child’s school records be sent to you.

We recommend that you send the letter by “certified, return receipt” mail. A copy of your letter and all receipts should be saved with your school records. If you choose to apply online, keep that receipt as well.

SAMPLE WITHDRAWAL LETTER TO SCHOOL

(Your Name)
(Address)

(Date)
(Name of School child is withdrawing from)
(Address)

To Whom it May Concern,

As of (Date home school enrollment), (Child's full legal name) **will no longer be attending your school. He/She will now be enrolled at** (name of school) **OR he/she will now attend a private school in our home.**

Sincerely,

(your signature)
(your name)

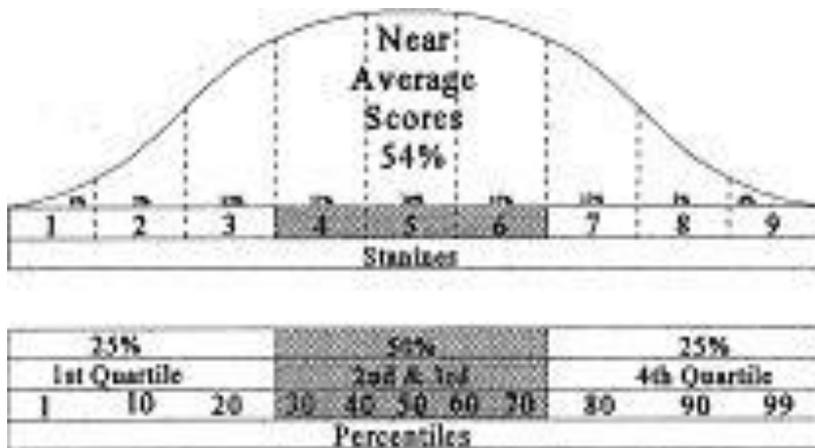
(Child's Full Legal Name)
(Birthdate)
(Race)
(Gender)

Testing Guide for Home Educators

What is standardized testing?

A standardized test is a test that compares the performance of a pupil with other pupils at the same level throughout the United States. Grasping the basic concept of a “norm” is the key to understanding the standardized tests. Anything can be put on a normed graph (if the sample group is large enough) and it will cluster around an average. The graph will always resemble the shape of a bell and is called a “bell curve.” For example, the weight of 100 newborn babies could be graphed and it would form a bell curve. In testing, the test companies select students (the norming group) who proportionately represent all races and all socio-economic levels. These scores are graphed to obtain the national norms.

How can the scores be understood?



Several scores have been developed that explain the results of the tests. The raw score is the actual number of the test

items answered correctly.

Another score is called the *stanine*. It comes from the word: Standard NINE. (See above graph.) The 1, 2, and 3 are below average; 7, 8, and 9 are above average. And 4, 5, and 6 are considered average. 54% of the scores are in this average range. The advantage of using the stanine score is that this score is as precise as one should be in reading the scores. To make a big deal over the difference between the 49th and 51st percentiles would be petty.

The *grade equivalent* is a score giving the grade level at which a certain raw score is achieved by an "average" student. The student handled the questions with the ease and efficiency of a student who has completed the grade and month indicated. *The rating does not mean the student taking the test can skip the content of the intervening grades.* The grade equivalent scores work fairly well in the middle test range, but not near the high or low end of a range. For example, if your second grader scored first or third grade, it is a good indicator. But if he scored sixth grade, you must be careful. The second grade test does not cover everything a sixth grader should know. It just means that this is what the sixth grader would have scored had he taken the same level test as the second grader. So at the extreme high and low ends of a test, the interpretation must be made with common sense.

National Percentile Rank, not to be confused with percentages, percentiles *rank* individuals within a group that are at or below your student's raw score. (See graph on page 14)

For an explanation of other scores, ask your test supplier.

What do standardized tests really measure?

Standardized tests reflect *academic achievement*. They indicate the relative standing of a student in comparison with students of the same grade in the norm group who took the test at a comparable time.

Tests scores may also reflect a child's *skill at taking tests*. There are many strategies in test taking that can raise a score. Also, costly mistakes may have been made on answer sheets, such as right answers put in the wrong place.

A test also measures a child's *physical and emotional condition on test day*. A child may not care about the test; or he may be frightened by the test, and not be able to think clearly. Group testing can also be harder for individually instructed, home-schooled children.

A test also *measures only the materials on the test*. Many homeschooling parents are concerned that the content of the test does not reflect the focus of the family's curriculum. This fact alone can make the test results invalid. In recent years, testing has become less trustworthy because of an increase practice in schools to "teach to the test." Teaching the test distorts instruction and makes the test less reliable.

Tests reflect values. For example, some questions involve a humanistic response or a different understanding of the roles of the father and mother.

Even though there may be variables that affect the validity of the test, a parent teaching his own child can use a standardized test as a tool for analysis. It can help determine any learning gaps in teaching and can also indicate that we are headed in the right direction.

There is concern that too much reliance is being placed on the achievement test. Some parents lean too heavily on the test, thinking that it will show them if they "did their job or not".

Some states' laws rely too much on the outcome of the test alone in deciding the future of a child. It is important to remember that the test is only one indicator and that many indicators are needed before important decisions are made. There is a place for the tests, but a balance is needed in how much importance should be placed on the test.

What can be done about low scores?

First, ask yourself: "Did I teach the curriculum? Did I finish the curriculum? Were there any difficulties my child had with the curriculum that were not resolved? Does my child talk me out of doing the hard parts of the curriculum?" If the curriculum is geared to the questions, relax and do not worry about it. Tests results are not infallible!

However, if you wish, you may consider retesting in a different manner. Things that may help include changing the external factors or administering the test yourself (or someone else if you administered the first test). You must strictly abide by the time limits and instructions. Certain concessions may be made for learning disabilities, etc. Check with your test supplier.

The achievement test, however, is not the only method of demonstrating progress to the Department of Education. A certified teacher evaluation can also be submitted stating that "this child is being taught in accordance with a sustained curriculum of a quality at least equal to that offered by public schools at his grade level (or in the case of children with mental or physical disabilities, at least equal to that offered by public schools to children with similar disabilities)."

Can the scores be misused?

Standardized test scores can be misused. Turning these scores into standards that must be met is a "misuse" of the scores. For example, several states require a child to score

above a certain percentile or he must return to school. Fortunately, Louisiana has made provision for the low achiever, handicapped child or learning disabled. For a slow learner, indicating that he progressed one year is sufficient. A handicapped child is to receive a sustained curriculum at least equal to what he would receive in public schools.

We must continually be aware of possible legislation that would attempt to use tests as standards rather than tools. Any standard that is based on norms can cause the student to be rated on his achievement in relation to a group rather than on his own performance. A student may be progressing well and still be in a low percentile. So, to have laws and regulations that use standardized tests to evaluate educational quality would be a misuse of the tests. Stay in touch with your state organization through your local support group to help ensure protection against unreasonable legislation. No important educational decision should be made on the basis of one test. This is true in our public schools as well. Teachers, as well as parents, know more about their students' academic abilities than the test scores can show them.

Which is the best test?

There is no "best" test. All tests are standardized. No one test is harder or easier, because the normalizing process evens everything out. You should score close to the same level on any of the standardized tests.

In choosing a test, ask yourself: "Will this test give me the information I need? Does it make the best use of my time and resources? Is the testing situation best for my child? Should I test or have someone else test my child?"

Where can homeschoolers obtain standardized tests?

Test publishers regulate the use of their tests closely to protect the reliability of their “norms”, as well as to not disclose the humanistic bias of these tests. They make them available to suppliers with the guarantee that certain conditions be met in administering the tests. Listed below is information on the most widely used standardized tests and how you might obtain them.

Contact a local homeschool support group to find out if they offer testing services. If not, they are usually able to locate one for you. Your child may also take these tests in local schools and adult education centers along with their students.

- *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* (ITBS) for grades 1-8 and *Test of Academic Proficiency* (TAP) for grades 9-12. These tests are thorough, and they emphasize understanding and the ability to generalize from principles to actual situations. A graduate of a four-year college program or a teacher in a conventional school must give the tests. They are available through Bob Jones University Press (BJU), Greenville, SC 29614. BJU will score the test and return very complete, detailed, and easy to read results. For information or to order a test, visit their website at www.bjupress.com or call 864-242-5100.
- *California Achievement Test* (CAT). This test is popular among homeschoolers because it contains more traditional values. There are no restrictions on the test administrator (parents may administer the test). When returning this test to be scored, request that you receive the percentile and stanine scores, as well as the grade equivalent. The CAT is available from Christian Liberty Academy at homeschools.org, or call 800-348-0899, then press 1.
- *Stanford Achievement Test* (SAT). The Stanford goes

beyond the basic skills to measure reasoning, thinking, analysis, and synthesis. The Stanford may only be given by a qualified tester, and may be ordered from BJU (who will also provide the names of testers in your area). This is a very thorough test with complete, detailed, easy to read results and skills performance ratings.

- BJU also offers *Cognitive Abilities Tests*, and *Writing Performance Evaluation*. Contact BJU at www.bjupress.com or call 864-242-5100.

When should the test be given?

When taking a standardized achievement test, it is important to give the test as close as possible to the time that the tests were normed. This will insure the most accurate score. Generally tests are normed for the spring between April 1 and April 30.

If a fall test is given, it should occur between September 15 and October 8. It is important to plan ahead and arrange for the test early, so that you have it when you are ready to test. However, if the test cannot be given during these times, it can be given at other times, depending on your supplier.

What should be done in preparation for the test?

Use practice tests to familiarize your child with test formats, directions, and test-taking strategies. Test taking resources are available through:

- Bob Jones University - www.bjupress.com or 864-242-5100
- Study to Succeed - www.studytosucceed.com
- Continental Press - www.continentalpress.com or 800-233-0759

Also, give your child practice doing work in a specified time limit – timed reading comprehension tests and timed math computation drills, for example. The National Center for Home Education recommends, in their *Testing Service for Home Schoolers* Booklet, that “the best preparation for the test is a good night’s rest and a nutritious breakfast. Attempting to ‘study’ for a standardized achievement test only contributes to a child’s anxiety level, thereby producing less than desired results. Preparing for achievement tests is done during the entire year of academic training.”

What importance should be placed on standardized tests?

Tests can be quite useful as in-group assessment. This is especially true in the homeschooling movement because homeschoolers compare favorably in their overall test scores. It demonstrates to the education community – in their own language – that this type of education works. For individual assessment, at best it can either be reassuring or show learning gaps. It is apparent that academic evaluation cannot be made on a student’s performance on one standardized test. The way to know whether your child is achieving satisfactorily is to “know your child.” If a parent is spending time with his child, with a dedication to the task of bringing him to maturity in wisdom as well as knowledge, he will surely know if the child is making an effort to learn and is progressing well, and he will know in what areas the child needs improvement. There will be no surprises. A standardized test will only confirm what the parent already knows.

Am I required to have my children tested yearly?

No. When you renew your application for the Home Study Program, you *may* choose to send standardized test scores as proof of academic progress, *or* you may choose to submit other information as outlined earlier in this pamphlet in the section titled “Home Education in Louisiana”.

Homeschooling Special Needs Children

1. Join HSLDA (Home School Legal Defense Association).
2. Assess the child's learning style – visual, audio, etc. A parent may enlist the assistance of a therapist if the child is receiving speech, occupational or physical therapy.
3. Select and purchase curriculum with consideration of the child's learning style.
4. Brainstorm on ways to modify/customize your teaching style to match the child's learning style, e.g., use posters, videos and pictures for a visual learner.
5. Utilize catalogs to get ideas on how to stimulate the child in a special learning style and enhance the learning experience.
6. Continually familiarize yourself with your child's special needs and special way of learning.
7. Frequent breaks may be of great benefit in educating a special needs child.
8. Use the child's interests as starting points for studies.
9. Utilize a library to supplement purchased curriculum or study materials.
10. Explore items from nature and your general household to provide hands-on experience while teaching.
11. Read books on home schooling, both basic instruction and information as well as emphasis on special needs children.
12. Guard any and all personal information. Avoid participation in public/government surveys of medical or educational nature if at all possible.

What else can I do for my special needs child?

by Joyce Herzog

Become a better teacher!!

- A. Be very consistent in treatment of behavior.
- B. Organize the physical setting where learning will take place.
- C. Provide a warm, caring, positive, encouraging emotional climate.
- D. Analyze the problem and find a next-step solution.
- E. Keep your cool and don't punish inability or confusion.
- F. Reward effort and small signs of progress.
- G. Find ways to repeat information in different ways and with different materials.
- H. Ask for and use your creative child's ideas when it is reasonable to do so.
- I. Let down and play with your child.
- J. Decide what is really important and concentrate on that!
- K. Be on your child's side. Remember, he is a person: your spiritual brother or sister.

Resources

NATHHAN: National Challenged Homeschoolers Associated Network, www.nathhan.com.

HSLDA: Homeschool Legal Defense Association. Homeschooling Your Special Needs Child; www.hsllda.org.

High School and Continuing Studies

Getting a job

In order to obtain a work permit, a minor child between the ages of 14 and 18 years, must apply to the school board by submitting a Minor Intent to Employ form. This form must be filled out by the prospective employer and signed by the parent. The Minor Intent to Employ form may be obtained from your local school board office or may be downloaded at www.laworks.net/ORS_MainMenu.asp.

Getting a driver's license

A minor (minimum 15 years of age) making application for a learner's permit must complete thirty (30) hours classroom instruction and six (6) hours behind the wheel driving instruction. The minor child must be accompanied by a custodial or domiciliary parent, tutor or legal guardian and present his/her own identification, sign the application and provide proof that the vehicle to be used for the road skills (driving) test is insured. The minor child must produce 2 valid forms of identification.

There are businesses that offer driver education courses in most cities or you may contact a local high school about participation in their class (usually held during the summer months). For more information contact your local DMV office. When your student goes to take his/her test to obtain a license, you'll need to bring a copy of your approved home study application or notice of enrollment if you chose to register as a private school. This is in lieu of any required truancy paperwork.

Does my child need a High School Diploma?

A student almost never *needs* a diploma. Few academic

institutions accept diplomas for admission, and rarely do they or employers ever ask to actually see one. Academic institutions are most often interested in transcripts. Stating 'yes' and filling in the name of your home school or even writing 'home school' on the application is sufficient for most employment. You would, of course, need to research any institution or program that your child may be applying to in order to determine whether or not a diploma is required and if so, whether or not it must be from an accredited institution. If a diploma from an accredited school is desired, there are distance-learning programs offered by many accredited schools that cater to home educators. Be sure a particular school's accreditations are recognized in your state and/or by the institution requiring the diploma before enrolling in any program.

Who issues the Diploma?

Unless your child will require a diploma from an accredited school, you, the parent, acting as administrator or principle of your home school will issue your child their diploma. A parent may 'fill-in-the-blanks' on a store bought preprinted certificate, print a computer generated diploma, order one from a local printer or purchase an impressive diploma from one of the many Internet businesses dedicated to serving home educators.

HSLDA sells diplomas on their website as well.

Should my child get a GED?

In most cases, it is not necessary. There are some situations where it might actually be detrimental. If your child plans on attending an institution of higher learning of any sort, then you would need to research the institution's admission policies.

Most institutions have developed policies regarding homeschooled students. Some colleges treat them as equal to GED applicants, while others place additional requirements

on persons with a GED than those who homeschool. The military no longer requires homeschooled students to obtain a GED.

Do I need to keep records?

Yes, even if your child does not plan to attend college, you will need to keep accurate records of your child's academic history. Some states may require a student's academic records in order to obtain a student's driver's license, some auto insurance companies calculate their rates based on the student's records or they may be required for admission to a special program for high school students. A program your child wishes to attend in the future may not require any documentation at present however; the policy may change by the time your child applies for admission. A young person's career choice may change many times during the high school years. Your child may decide to attend college, after all. Some colleges require transcripts and some do not. Transcripts might be required when applying for a particular scholarship. In any case, it is much easier to maintain documentation as one progresses, than it is to backtrack in order to collect the necessary information.

What type of records should I keep?

Transcripts are the documentation of the academic courses your child completed along with the grades they received (GPA). There are many books, computer programs and websites that offer various reproducible forms that will help you generate a traditional transcript with instructions on calculating a GPA.

A typical transcript will not be sufficient in recording all of the information you might need or wish to compile. Assemble a portfolio in which you would keep a complete history of your child's high school career. The documentation you may wish to put in your student's portfolio could include:

- Transcripts
- Annual standardized test scores (CAT, IOWA, Stanford, etc.)
- Scores from college entrance exams (ACT, SAT, etc.)
- Letters of recommendation
- Student essays
- Commendations received through participation in clubs and organizations (4H, Scouts, civic and political groups, etc.)
- Certificates earned through instructional courses (CPR, life guard training, foreign languages, cake decorating, computer programming, etc.)
- Music and dance competition scores
- Records of sports participation and statistics
- Records of employment and apprenticeships
- Records of community service projects and hours of service

Anything that shows your child has demonstrated leadership skills, responsibility, ability to learn, and ability to finish a task should be included in your record keeping. Not all of this material may be necessary, but as stated earlier, you may need it down the road.

What about college?

Home educated students are not only welcomed by most colleges and universities, in many cases they are actively recruited. Studies show that homeschool students perform well, both academically and socially, in the college environment.

The homeschooling family does not have the multitude of career counselors, financial aid institutions or college recruiters seeking them out, as do the governmental school students. You will have to search out the information and opportunities for your child. The preparations for college should begin as early as the 8th grade.

Preparing for College

After investigating the admissions policies of any institutions that interest your child, adapt your curriculum and record keeping to meet those requirements. Find out which admissions exam, if any, is required and begin making the necessary preparations for taking the test. (*See section titled "Admissions Exams".*)

Extra-Curricular Activities

Involve your homeschooler in extra-curricular activities that interest him or that pertain to his particular field of study. Taking part in extra-curricular activities are very important factors, if not requirements, to those making the admissions decisions. Community and organizational involvement may be factors used by agencies to determine financial aid and scholarship awards. Participation in these activities will help develop skills necessary for the college bound student.

Most of the clubs and organizations that are open to young people in the government school arena are also open to homeschoolers. Many also offer scholarships to their members. Find out what activities are available in local homeschool support groups. If an activity your child is interested in is not available within a local support group, check with the organization's headquarters to find out if you would be able to open a chapter yourself. You might also check with a local high school about participation in their programs. (*See the information about participating in Louisiana High School Athletic Association activities in the section titled "Registration Under the Home Study Program" of this pamphlet.*)

Honor Societies

The National Honor Society does not permit homeschoolers to join. Eta Sigma Alpha National Home School Honor Society (the first national homeschool honor society) and The National Society of High School Scholars (founded by Claes

Nobel, whose family established the Nobel Prizes) are two honor societies open to home educated students. For more information about Eta Sigma Alpha, visit their website at www.etasigmaalpha.com.

For information about NSHSS, visit their website at www.nshss.org.

Admission Exams

In almost all instances, applicants to a traditional 4-year college will be required to submit test scores from either the American College Testing Exam (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). These standardized tests are used by educational institutions to determine admissions decisions, course placement (developmental, regular or advanced) and to counsel students on an appropriate course of study. These test results may also be used when determining financial aid and scholarships awards.

The ACT is administered at local schools and colleges several times each year. The cost is approximately \$35. Students may register for the test on-line, find information on test sites and dates and download free test preparation materials at www.actstudent.org.

The SAT is administered at local schools and colleges several times each year. The cost is approximately \$47. Information on testing sites, test dates, preparation materials and registration is available on-line at www.collegeboard.com or call 866-756-7346.

Louisiana’s Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)

Only SBESE-Approved Home Study students qualify for TOPS scholarships. A student must have been enrolled in a SBESE-Approved Home Study Program for at least the 11th and 12th grades. Students registered under the Private School Option do **not** qualify. If the student ever enrolled in a Louisiana

public high school or non-public high school or an approved non-Louisiana high school that was or has been approved by SBESE, the student must have successfully completed both the 11th and 12th grades of a home study program approved by SBESE and the previously attended high school must provide LOSFA with certification that the student was in good standing at the time the student last attended that school.

Because of the joint effort between HSLDA, your phone calls, and CHEF of Louisiana's work in the Legislature, House Bill 634 was signed into law in July, 2007, making TOPS awards more accessible for home study graduates. A number of home study parents and students testified in favor of the bill, which also contributed greatly to its passage.

A home study student must score 2 points higher than public or approved non-public school students on the ACT for a TOPS-Tech or Opportunity Award but only 1 point higher on the ACT for a Performance or Honors Award.

A home study student is eligible for a TOPS-Tech Award with a 19, an Opportunity Award with a 22, a Performance Award with a 24, and an Honors Award with a 28 on the ACT.

The passage of House Bill 634 is a victory for several reasons. If the bill had not passed, homeschoolers would have gone back to having to score 3 points higher on the ACT for all TOPS Awards. Additionally, while homeschoolers still have to score higher than their public or approved non-public school counterparts, home study students are not required to meet the core curriculum requirements established by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

For more information on TOPS visit their website at www.osfa.state.la.us or call 1-800-259-5626, Ext 1012. Contact the financial aid office of the institution where your child will apply for information on TOPS as well as other scholarships that are available.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment allows advanced high school students to take classes that earn high school and college credit at the same time. If your homeschooler is ready to take college-level courses, he may be eligible for a dual enrollment program either at a college or through a distance-learning program. Check with the college admissions office to find out if they offer such a program, what the requirements are and how many college credits may be obtained.

Obtaining College Credit through CLEP, DSST (Formerly DAN TES) and Departmental Exams

Students may be able to cut short the amount of time required to obtain a degree and save dollars off tuition expenses by testing out of some college courses. Most colleges offer credit-by-examination in one of the following ways:

- College Level Examination Program (CLEP) offers testing in several college level subjects that allows a student to obtain college credit from life experiences and/or prior education. There are over 2,900 institutions that grant credit for CLEP.
- The Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), formerly known as Defense Activity for Nontraditional Educational Support (DANTES) are used by educational institutions and the workforce in much the same way as CLEP.

Inquire into the credit-by-examination policy of any educational institution you are interested in to find out if they grant credit for CLEP or DSST. Information on CLEP may be found at www.collegeboard.com or by calling 1-800-257-9558. Information on DAN TES may be found at www.getcollegetcredit.com or by calling 1-877-471-9860.

To earn departmental credit, students work with a specific department at a college, rather than through the college's admissions office. Each department creates its own exam. Speak with the department chair to find out the specifics of the exams.

Alternatives to Traditional College

For the same multitude of reasons most persons would choose a distance-learning program (scheduling flexibility, finances, course availability, etc.), it is also an option open to the homeschool student. Numerous colleges and universities of all rankings offer distance-learning programs. Be sure to research the institution's accreditations, policies and transferability of credits thoroughly before enrolling.

Technical schools offer a student the opportunity to enter the workforce much earlier than traditional colleges. In many cases, TOPS awards may be used toward the tuition. Check with the admissions office or with TOPS to find out which schools and programs qualify.

Apprenticeships are an option for career training. Seek out qualified persons in the trade or industry that your homeschooler is interested in. Speak with them about how they received their training and inquire about apprenticeship opportunities.

Military Enlistment

Most homeschoolers enlisting in the military will be considered Tier 1*. Homeschoolers who score a 50 or above on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) will automatically be placed in Tier 1.

A GED is no longer required for any branch of the service. A notarized, parent-generated transcript should be adequate.

Some recruiters may not be familiar with the regulations concerning homeschooled applicants. HSLDA recommends bringing along a copy of the GED memorandum found on their website at <http://www.hslda.org/mlink.asp?id=3820> when visiting the recruiting office. A press release about homeschooled students being returned to the Tier 1 status might also be of help, and may be found at <http://nche.hslda.org/docs/news/hslda/200707030.asp>. HSLDA's website offers a wealth of helpful information for students interested in joining the military.

Resources:

www.oklahomahomeschool.com/careertraining.html

www.edplus.com

doleta.gov/oa/ - U.S. Dept of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training

www.laworks.net

The High School Handbook - Junior and Senior High School at Home
by Mary Schofield

** - The "Tier" Classification System is used to classify new enlistees based on attrition rates. Attrition rates are the rate at which new Service members complete their first tour of service, generally four years.*

About HSLDA

Home School Legal Defense Association is a nonprofit advocacy organization established to defend and advance the constitutional right of parents to direct the education of their children and to protect family freedoms. Through annual memberships, HSLDA is tens of thousands of families united in service together, providing a strong voice when and where needed.

HSLDA advocates on the legal front by fully representing member families at every stage of proceedings. Each year, thousands of member families receive legal consultation by letter and phone, hundreds more are represented through negotiations with local officials, and dozens are represented in court proceedings. HSLDA also takes the offensive, filing actions to protect members against government intrusion and to establish legal precedent. On occasion, HSLDA will handle precedent-setting cases for nonmembers, as well.

HSLDA advocates on Capitol Hill by tracking federal legislation that affects homeschooling and parental rights. HSLDA works to defeat or amend harmful bills, but also works proactively, introducing legislation to protect and preserve family freedoms.

HSLDA advocates in state legislatures, at the invitation of state homeschool organizations, by assisting individual states in drafting language to improve their homeschool legal environment and to fight harmful legislation.

HSLDA advocates in the media by presenting articulate and knowledgeable spokesmen to the press on the subject of homeschooling. HSLDA staff members are regularly called upon for radio, television, and print interviews, and their writings are frequently published in newspapers and magazines across the country. HSLDA's own bimonthly magazine, *The Home School Court Report*, provides news and commentary on a host of current issues affecting

homeschoolers. And its two-minute daily radio broadcast, *Home School Heartbeat*, can be heard on nearly 500 radio stations.

HSLDA advocates for the movement by commissioning and presenting quality research on the progress of homeschooling. Whether it's in print, from the podium, or on the air, HSLDA provides insightful vision and leadership for the cause of homeschooling.

Home School Legal Defense Association . . . tens of thousands of American families working through more than 50 dedicated staff members to preserve each other's right to homeschool . . . together, "Advocates for Family & Freedom."

"We protect your right to homeschool"

Since 1983, Home School Legal Defense Association's primary goal has remained the same—to bring together a large number of homeschooling families so that each can have a low-cost method of obtaining quality legal defense. HSLDA gives families the freedom to homeschool without having to face legal threats alone. Through many families sticking together, we have been able to keep the cost of a year's membership close to the rate that you would have to pay for an hour of an attorney's time almost anywhere else.

After a family joins HSLDA, there are no further charges of any kind for defending them in court. HSLDA pays in full all attorney fees, expert witness costs, travel expenses, and all other court costs permissible by state law for us to pay.

The vast majority of contacts that member families face are successfully resolved through our early intervention without any court action. Many times, HSLDA attorneys call or write letters on behalf of members contacted by local officials. For

the situations that wind up in court, HSLDA provides full representation at every stage of legal proceedings.

“We defend your future liberty”

As a member, you not only receive numerous tangible benefits, but you also receive the intangible and invaluable blessing of defending liberty for future generations. Your membership not only works to further your right to homeschool now, but through you, countless other families will enjoy these same liberties as they seek to homeschool their own children in future generations.

To Join HSLDA:

Call 1-540-338-5600 or Visit the website at www.hslda.org

Members of CHEF of Louisiana Support Groups receive a discount!

Why should I join a CHEF of LA support group?

The benefits one receives as a member of a support group are so numerous! The informational, academic and emotional support can make a world of difference in your family's homeschooling experience.

Here are just a few of the many benefits:

- Keep informed on national and state level news of legislation, court cases and other events that influence the future of home education
- Curriculum information
- Teaching strategies
- Co-ops
- Graduation ceremony
- Yearbooks
- Socialization and skills gained through access to clubs, organizations, field trips and play groups
- Like-minded camaraderie and emotional support for your family
- Helpful advice on home life: discipline, household organization and adjusting to one income
- Access to information about local programs and contact info of helpful persons – while a state organization provides support to the leadership of the local group, the local group members have years of experience working with local officials and points of contact in the area in which you live.
- Discount on HSLDA membership fee
- Discount on the annual CHEF of Louisiana Convention registration fee

JOIN A CHEF GROUP NEAR YOU!

Visit us online at: www.chefofla.org

Call CHEF of LA: 1-888-876-CHEF

Email us at secretary@chefofla.org

Homeschool Friendly Organizations

CHEF of Louisiana would like to recognize the following state and national organizations for their outstanding ongoing efforts to promote and protect our home education freedoms.

- **HSLDA - Federal Relations (National Center for Home Education)**
www.nche.hsllda.org
- **National Black Home Educators**
www.nbhe.net
- **National Home Education Research Institute**
www.nheri.org
- **Louisiana Family Forum**
www.lafamilyforum.org
- **Family Research Council**
www.frc.org