

## Homeschooling in Tennessee

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### Introduction

Tennessee statute recognizes four different types of homeschooling. In each type students receive most of their instruction at home, though in some instances students may be enrolled in non-public schools. Students who are enrolled in a satellite program of a church-related school, for example, can be considered either homeschool students or nonpublic school students. Regulation, including registration and testing, vary for the different types. School districts report the number of independent homeschool students to the state, but do not report the number of other types of homeschool students. Independent homeschool students' test results are included in the results of the district in which they are registered.

The homeschool statute is complex, which may make it difficult for homeschool coordinators in school districts to understand their responsibilities or to appropriately exercise the authority they have. Reporting requirements in the statute have led to confusion about who receives and maintains records of test results and enrollment.

During previous legislative sessions, committee discussions relative to homeschooling have included such topics as: homeschool students' access to public school classes and extracurricular activities (including sports); regulation of homeschooling; testing requirements and reporting requirements for homeschool students; academic qualifications of homeschool parents; and homeschool students' eligibility for Tennessee lottery scholarships.

Tennessee passed its first homeschool law in 1985. Nationally, the number of homeschool students has been steadily increasing over the last two decades. Exact numbers are difficult to determine because many

states, including Tennessee, do not have complete records on the number of children being homeschooled. According to the Tennessee Department of Education, the total number of children being independently homeschooled in Tennessee in the 2010–11 school year was 3,457. This number does not include homeschool students who are enrolled in satellite programs of non-public church-related schools.

Home education is regulated by state statute, by State Board of Education (SBOE) rules, and by local boards of education policies. Home education is not free from public accountability nor from the effects of public policy. Home education policies are predominantly made at the state level in Tennessee, but school district personnel (including principals) can make policies that affect home-educated students. There are multiple stakeholders who have strong views on home education policies and there is often a lack of communication and collaboration among stakeholders. Little data is available on the demographic characteristics of homeschool students, the instructional practices of homeschool parents, or the academic achievement of homeschool students in Tennessee. The Tennessee Home Education Association (THEA) is the largest homeschool organization in Tennessee, but there are numerous other smaller homeschool organizations and over 100 homeschool support groups. Homeschool support groups provide support to homeschool families through information on homeschooling, curriculum resources, academic classes, and/ or extracurricular activities. Support groups also provide an opportunity for homeschool parents and their children to communicate with other homeschool students. Homeschool support groups are usually run by homeschooling parents, and some charge membership dues and fees for classes.

This report includes an analysis of the state homeschool law, policies, and practices in Tennessee, and the results of the Comptroller’s Offices of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) 2011 homeschool coordinator survey. Survey results represent 119 school districts, a response rate of 88 percent.

**Homeschool Laws and Policies in Tennessee**

Tennessee passed its first homeschool law in 1985.<sup>5</sup> Prior to 1985, the practice of homeschooling was in conflict with the state’s compulsory school attendance law. Since its passage, the law has been revised several times, most recently in 2011.

Tennessee’s homeschool law is one of the most complex in the nation. There are multiple categories of homeschool students, and some of the categories overlap. For example, a student who is enrolled in a satellite campus of a church-related school (CRS) can be considered either a homeschool student or a non-public school student. Students may also be associated with a CRS, but not enrolled, in which case they are considered homeschool students. Of the states that have homeschool laws, Tennessee and Pennsylvania allow individual home schools to be classified as satellite campuses of non-public schools; four other

*A home school is a school conducted or directed by a parent or legal guardian for their own children.*

*- Tennessee Code Annotated, sec. 49-6-3050(a)(1)*

states (Alaska, Louisiana, Michigan, and Ohio) allow individual home schools to be classified as non-public schools.<sup>6</sup>

The State Board of Education has established categories of non-public schools in Tennessee.<sup>7</sup> (See Exhibit 1.)

According to state law, “a home school is a school conducted or directed by a parent or parents or a legal guardian or guardians for their own children.”<sup>8</sup> Parents can either teach their children themselves or “direct” another adult (such as a tutor) to do so. Prior to the revision of the law in 2011, parents could direct another person (i.e., a tutor who met the same qualifications of a homeschool parent) to homeschool their children only under certain circumstances (i.e., parent illness or inadequacy to teach the subject matter). Tennessee statute provides four different ways that parents can homeschool. In all of these instances students receive most of their instruction at home; however, in some

**Exhibit 1: Non-Public School Categories in Tennessee**

Non-Public School Category	Description
Category 1 – TDOE Approved	Approved by TDOE. (This includes Category 1-Special Purpose schools.)
Category 2 – Agency Approved	Approved by non-public school accrediting agency that is recommended for approval by the TDOE and is approved by the SBOE.
Category 3 – Regionally Accredited	Accredited by a regional accrediting association.
Category 4 – Exempted Church-Related Schools (CRS)	CRS that are “operated by denominational, parochial or other bona fide church organizations, which are required to meet the standards of accreditation or membership” of certain associations listed in SBOE Rules.
Category 5 – Acknowledged for Operation	Non-Category 1–4 schools and are acknowledged for operation by the TDOE.
Category 6 – International Schools Affiliated with a Tennessee Public University	Non-public international secondary schools that are affiliated with and approved by a Tennessee public university that is approved by the SBOE to approve these schools. These schools are recognized by the TDOE as approved schools.

Source: Rules of the State Board of Education, Chapter 0520-07-02, Non-Public School Approval Process, effective Dec. 2011.

instances students are enrolled in non-public schools:<sup>9</sup>

1. Students can register with their local school district as independent homeschool students;
2. Students can register and be associated with a church-related school (CRS, also referred to as “umbrella schools”) (Category 4 non-public schools<sup>A</sup>);
3. Students can enroll in a distance learning program of an accredited non-public school (Category 3 non-public schools<sup>B</sup>);
4. Students can enroll in a CRS and be educated at home, in which case the home is considered a satellite campus of the CRS.

These options help establish a classification for students who are educated at home, but not all such students are “homeschool students” for purposes of the law. Students who are enrolled in distance learning programs of non-public schools are not considered to be homeschool students because they are enrolled in a non-public school. Students who are enrolled in CRS satellite programs may be considered non-public school students, but may also be considered homeschool students.

In 1999, the TDOE verified the legality of CRS satellite campuses in a memorandum sent to school district superintendents. The “Jeter Memo” stated that a student may enroll in a satellite program of a CRS and be educated at home.<sup>10</sup> In 2011, state law was revised in an effort to codify this aspect of the Jeter Memo.<sup>11</sup>

The requirements set forth in the state law are different for each type of home education.<sup>12</sup> (See Exhibit 2.)

In addition, the law requires that independent homeschool students must:<sup>13</sup>

1. “Provide annual notice to the local director of schools prior to each school year of the parent-teacher’s intent to conduct a home school and, for the purpose of reporting only, submission to

the director of schools of the names, number, ages and grade levels of the children to be home schooled, the location of the school, the proposed curriculum to be offered, the proposed hours of instruction and the qualifications of the parent-teacher;”

2. Maintain attendance records and submit these records to the Director of Schools at the end of each school year; and
3. Submit proof of vaccination and receipt of any health services or examinations as required by law.

In 2009, the General Assembly passed a new law that requires local and state government agencies to consider a homeschool diploma and a diploma issued by a CRS the same as a public school diploma.<sup>14</sup>

#### Regulation of Homeschooling in Other States

Regulation of homeschooling varies from state to state. (See Exhibit 2.) According to the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), 10 states have no homeschool regulations, 14 states have low regulation (parents have to report that they are homeschooling), 20 states (including Tennessee) and Washington, D.C., have moderate regulation (e.g., parents have to submit evidence of their child’s academic achievement), and six states have high regulation of homeschooling (e.g., parent-teacher qualifications).<sup>15</sup> In Tennessee, parents of independent homeschool students must report to their local school district that they are homeschooling, and students must take standardized tests in grades 5, 7, and 9 (either the parent or the testing service reports the results to the school district). Studies conducted by the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI)<sup>C</sup> found that the degree of state regulation of homeschooling has no effect on the academic achievement of homeschool students.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>A</sup> SBOE Rules divide non-public schools into categories based on certain characteristics. These non-public school categories are separate from the homeschool options included in this report. SBOE Rules classify church-related schools as Category 4 non-public schools, but these schools can be classified as both Category 4 schools and Category 1 and 2 schools. For example, if a CRS is approved by the TDOE, that school would be classified as a Category 4 school and a Category 1 school.

<sup>B</sup> Category 3 non-public schools are regionally accredited non-public schools. In Tennessee, there are a number of distance learning and online schools that are Category 3 schools.

<sup>C</sup> NHERI is a nonprofit organization that conducts and publishes research on homeschooling.

**Exhibit 2: A Comparison of the Requirements for Home Education in Tennessee**

	<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>	<b>Standardized Testing</b>	<b>Student Academic Progress</b>	<b>Instructional Time</b>
<b><u>Independent</u> Independent homeschool students who register with their school district.</b>	Parents must have a high school diploma or a GED.	Students in grades 5, 7, and 9 must take the same SBOE approved standardized tests required of public school students. Tests can be administered by either the Commissioner of Education or Commissioner’s designee free of charge, or by a professional testing service approved by the school district at the parent’s expense. The test results shall be reported to the parent, the SBOE, and the Director of Schools.	If the student falls 3–6 months behind grade level (based on test results), the parent-teacher shall consult with the Director of Schools. If the student falls 6–9 months behind grade level, the parent shall consult with a certified teacher, design a remedial course for the student, and report the results of the course to the Director of Schools. If the student falls more than 1 year behind grade level, the student must take the test again not more than 1 year later. If the student falls more than 1 year behind grade level for 2 consecutive years, the Director of Schools may require the parent to enroll the child in a public or non-public school.	Parents must provide instruction for at least 4 hours per day for the same number of instructional days as are required by state law for public schools.
<b><u>Registered with Church-Related School</u> Students who register or are associated with a CRS (Category 4 non-public school).</b>	Parents must have a high school diploma or GED to teach grades 9–12.	No requirements.	No requirements.	No requirements.
<b><u>Distance Learning</u> Students who enroll in a distance learning program of an accredited non-public school and are homeschooled (Category 3 non-public school).</b>	Qualifications are set by the school in which the child is enrolled.	No requirements.	No requirements.	No requirements.

<b><u>Enrolled in CRS</u></b> <b>Students who are enrolled in a CRS, whose home is considered a satellite campus and whose parent is a teacher in the school.</b>	Qualifications are set by the school in which the child is enrolled.	No requirements.	No requirements.	No requirements.
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Source: *Tennessee Code Annotated*, sec. 49-6-3050.

### Parent Qualifications

The credentials parents must have in order to homeschool vary from state to state. Nine states and D.C. require parents to have either a high school diploma or a GED in order to homeschool; Tennessee is included in this group with regard to independent homeschool students.<sup>17</sup> (See Exhibit 1.) A U.S. Department of Education study in 1998 of 20,706 homeschool students and 11,930 homeschool families found that whether or not a homeschool parent had a teaching certificate did not have a statistically significant effect on the academic achievement of homeschool students. The education level of the parent did have a statistically significant effect: “at every grade level, children of college graduates outperform children whose parents do not have a college degree.”<sup>18</sup> The same study also found that homeschool students whose parents do not have a college degree outperformed public school students at every grade level.<sup>19</sup>

### Testing Requirements for Homeschool Students

In 1988, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that states have the right to require homeschool students to be tested annually (*Murphy v. State of Arkansas*).<sup>20</sup> Eleven states, including Tennessee, require some homeschool students to take standardized tests and 13 other states require homeschool students to be evaluated.<sup>21</sup> The frequency and grade level at which students must be tested varies from state to state. Some states (e.g., North Carolina) require that students be tested every year, while other states (e.g., Pennsylvania) require that

students be tested only at certain grade levels.

Tennessee’s testing requirements apply to independent homeschool students.

### State Responsibilities Regarding Home Education

The Office of Non-Public and Home Schools<sup>D</sup> within the TDOE provides information and resources to homeschool students. The Office tracks the number of independent homeschool students in the state. (See Exhibit 4.) Additional roles and responsibilities of the office include:<sup>22</sup>

- Providing information to districts regarding current home school laws;
- Receiving monthly reports from home school coordinators;
- Providing information concerning home school options, as needed, to home school families;
- Providing Hope Scholarship information;
- Maintaining a list of acceptable online schools;
- Communicating with church-related satellite schools, updating lists, documenting required paperwork yearly;
- Providing links to resources (e.g., Tennessee Curriculum Standards) for home educators.

The Office maintains a website

(<http://www.tn.gov/education/homeschool/>) with

information and resources for home educators including:

- Tennessee home education laws and policies;
- List of and contact information for home school coordinators;
- Forms for parents who intend to home school.

<sup>D</sup> Marcy Tidwell is the current Director of Non-Public and Home Schools for the Tennessee Department of Education.

### Exhibit 3: Regulation of Homeschooling in Other States

Degree of Regulation:	No Regulations	Low Regulation (e.g., parents have to report that they homeschool)	Moderate Regulation (e.g., parents have to submit evidence of their child's academic achievement)	High Regulation: (e.g., parent-teacher qualifications)
<b>States:</b>	Alaska, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Texas	Alabama, Arizona, California, Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wisconsin, Wyoming	Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, Virginia	Massachusetts, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont

Source: Homeschool Legal Defense Association, "State Laws," <http://www.hslda.org> (accessed Oct. 11, 2011).

The Office also maintains a list of non-public schools, keeps track of their accreditation/association, and works with the Office of Federal Programs within the TDOE to compile data from the annual "Center for Research on Education Policy (CREP) Private School Enrollment and Participation Survey" that school districts are required to complete.

#### Reporting Requirements

State law and SBOE rules may be in conflict with regard to reporting requirements for non-public schools with satellite programs. State law requires schools with satellite programs to report the names, ages, and residences of enrolled students to the school district within whose boundaries *the school is located*. SBOE Rule 0520-07-02 requires non-public schools to report this information to the school district within whose boundaries *the student resides*. Non-public schools with satellite programs typically report "total enrollment" and are not required to disaggregate that total to show enrollment for individual satellite campuses. The TDOE and many homeschool coordinators surveyed identified this as a weakness of current homeschool laws and policies in Tennessee.<sup>23</sup> In October 2011, there were

approximately 120 CRSs in Tennessee that reported having a satellite program.<sup>E, 24</sup>

The TDOE does not maintain records of the total number of homeschool students enrolled in all non-public schools. The TDOE does maintain records of the number of independent homeschool students by grade level in each school district. According to those records, the number of children being independently homeschooled in Tennessee in the 2010–11 school year was 3,457: 3,140 in grades K–8 and 317 in grades 9–12.<sup>25</sup> (See Exhibit 4.) The TDOE receives test data for each independent homeschool student who takes the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) test. Homeschool student test results are included with the school districts' TCAP results and are not analyzed separately as a group.<sup>26</sup> State law requires the test results of independent homeschool students who are in 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades to be reported to the SBOE, but does not specify who is required to report these results.<sup>27</sup> The SBOE does not regularly receive and does not maintain records of test results of homeschool students.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>E</sup> For a list of non-public schools with satellite programs, visit the Tennessee DOE Office of Non-Public Schools' website: <http://www.tn.gov/education/nonpublic/index.shtml>



Local Governments' Responsibilities Regarding Home Education

According to the TDOE, school districts are primarily responsible for monitoring independent homeschool students and ensuring that homeschool parents comply with the homeschool statute.<sup>29</sup> Each school district has one or more homeschool coordinators.<sup>F</sup> In the 2011–12 school year there were 181 homeschool coordinators in Tennessee.<sup>30</sup> The duties of homeschool coordinators include:<sup>31</sup>

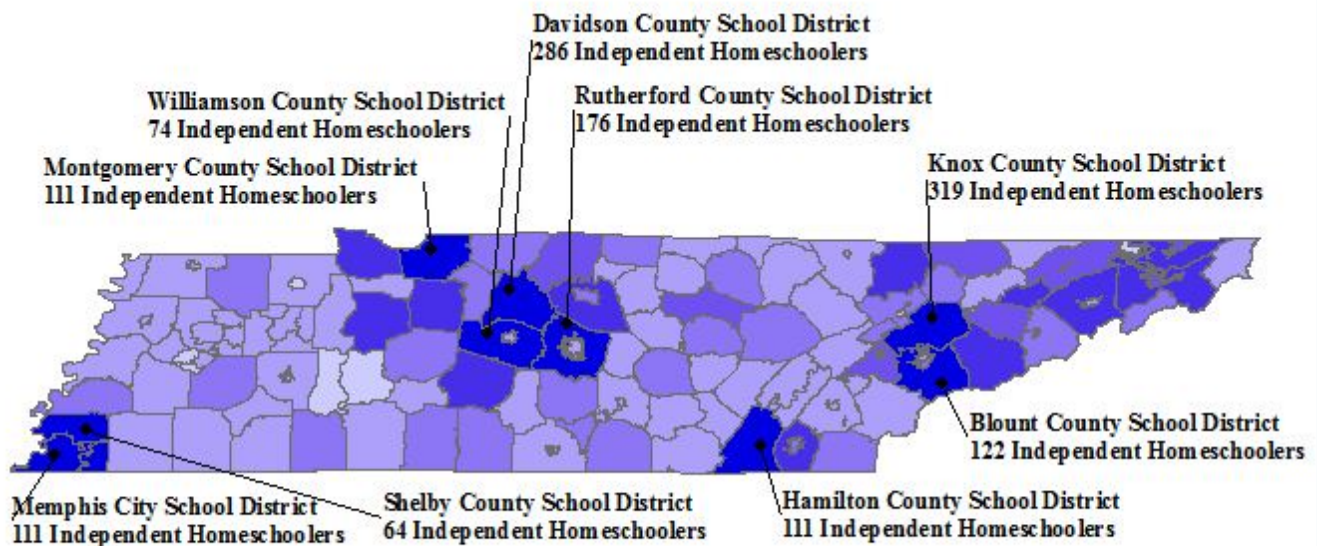
- Maintaining file of students whose parents have submitted an “Intent to Home School” form;
- Documenting that homeschooling parents have met the educational requirements of *Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.)* 49-6-3050 and that parents provide proof of student immunizations;
- Filing an updated copy of the monthly reporting forms with the state office of non-public and home schools (the reports must include the number of children per grade level being homeschooled);

*The TDOE records the number of independent homeschool students, by grade level (K–8 and 9–12) in each school district, but does not keep records on the academic achievement/ progress of homeschool students.*

- Notifying home schooling parents of their responsibilities under *T.C.A.* 49-6-3050;
- Notifying home schooling parents within a reasonable time each year that their child must be tested by the school district or a district-approved testing service;
- Examining test results each year and establishing a plan of action as described by *T.C.A.* 49-6-3050 for students who do not meet the required standards.

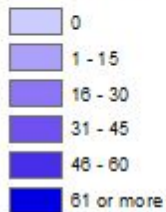
A school district may file truancy charges against the parent of a child between the ages of six and 17 who does not provide proof of enrollment in a non-public

**Exhibit 4: Number of Independent Homeschoolers Registered in Tennessee School Districts, April 2011**



**All School Districts**

Total Registered Homeschoolers



Source: Marcy Tidwell, Tennessee Department of Education, Director of Non-Public and Home Schools, “Homeschool Totals by System – April 2011,” in “State Comptroller’s Office Questionnaire,” e-mail attachment, “RE: Homeschool Questions,” Oct. 19, 2011.

<sup>F</sup> Carroll County School District is a special case; the district itself does not enroll students. There are five special school districts within the county that serve students in grades K–12, and each of these has a homeschool coordinator. Cliff Sturdivant, Field Service Center Director, Tennessee Department of Education, telephone interview, April 3, 2012.

school to the district or does not register with the district as an independent homeschooler. A school district can mark an independent homeschool student absent, if the student in grades 5, 7, or 9 does not complete the testing required by law (i.e., TCAPs in K–8 and End of Course Assessments in 9–12), but the law is unclear as to what the repercussions are if a parent does not bring a homeschool student in for testing.<sup>32</sup> Many homeschool coordinators are unaware of the legal recourse they have if a homeschool parent fails to register or fails to bring their child in for testing.<sup>33</sup>

According to OREA’s 2011 survey of homeschool coordinators, almost all school districts receive the standardized test results for independent homeschool students, but few analyze or keep records of the test results.<sup>G, 34</sup> Seventeen percent of homeschool coordinators reported that one or more independent homeschool students in their district had fallen below grade level in the past five years, as evidenced by scores on state standardized tests.<sup>35</sup> These students either: (1) were retested, scored proficient, and were allowed to continue homeschooling, (2) returned to public schools, (3) enrolled in a CRS, (4) received a warning from the school district, or (5) were labeled as learning disabled and continued homeschooling.<sup>36</sup>

#### Homeschool Student Participation in Public School Classes, Extracurricular Activities, and Athletics

State law allows independent homeschool students to use public school facilities if the school principal approves. There is no provision that specifically allows students who are enrolled in a distance learning program of a non-public school or students who are enrolled in a CRS but are homeschooled to use public school facilities.<sup>37</sup> State law is silent as to whether homeschool students can take classes or participate in extracurricular activities at a public school; such participation is at the discretion of school districts and school principals.

Eleven states allow homeschool students to enroll and participate in public school classes.<sup>38</sup> In *Swanson v.*

*Guthrie* (1998), the U.S. 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that school boards have the right to deny homeschool students access to public school classes.<sup>39</sup> Some public schools in Tennessee allow homeschool students to take classes. School districts in Tennessee that allow homeschool students to participate in public school classes can receive additional funding for those students. School districts receive funding for homeschool students who are enrolled in public school classes for the proportionate amount of time during the school day that the student is enrolled.<sup>40</sup> School districts do not receive funding for homeschool students who participate in public school extracurricular activities.

Based on results of the OREA survey:<sup>41</sup>

- Ten percent of school districts allow homeschool students to enroll in public school classes, 78 percent do not, and 12 percent do not have a policy;<sup>H</sup>
- Twelve percent of school districts allow homeschool students to participate in extracurricular activities (excluding athletics) at public schools, 78 percent do not, and 10 percent do not have a policy;
- Thirty-one percent of school districts allow homeschool students to participate in public school athletic activities, 63 percent do not, and six percent do not have a policy.

Currently, 16 states allow homeschool students to participate in public school athletic programs.<sup>42</sup> In court cases concerning homeschool students’ participation in public school athletic programs, judges have held that participation in such programs is a privilege, not a right, and upheld the ability of state and local governments to prohibit homeschool students’ participation.<sup>43,44</sup> Courts have found in a few cases that homeschool students do not have a specific right to participate in public school athletic programs, but that athletic associations (in these specific cases) could not prohibit homeschool students from participating.<sup>I</sup>

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<sup>G</sup> Carroll County School District was not included because it does not have a homeschool coordinator.

<sup>H</sup> Percentages are based on the number of homeschool coordinators who responded to this survey question. Percentages may not equal or may exceed 100 percent due to rounding.

<sup>I</sup> *Davis v. Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association* (1995); *Duffley v. New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association* (1982).



In Tennessee, local governments (e.g., local boards of education, school principals) have the authority to decide whether independent homeschool students are allowed to participate in public school athletic programs. Students in member schools of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) must meet eligibility requirements and follow guidelines established by TSSAA. (See Exhibit 5.) In July 2011, TSSAA amended its bylaws to allow independent homeschool students to participate in public school athletic programs; school district officials still determine whether such students may participate.<sup>45</sup> Homeschool students must meet certain residency and academic eligibility requirements set by the school district and TSSAA in order to participate (e.g., students must be enrolled in at least five academic courses approved by the public school or district). School districts can impose additional testing requirements on independent homeschool students if the students want to participate in a public school athletic program. Homeschool students must also meet TSSAA's 10 basic eligibility requirements for all students and have basic medical insurance and liability insurance (if the school's liability insurance does not include homeschool students). Homeschool students must pay participation fees up to \$300 and pay any other fees the school charges to all other athletes participating in a certain sport. Athletic teams at TSSAA member schools are allowed to play homeschool and Category 4–6 school athletic teams.

Public Funding and/or Support for Homeschool students

Parents of homeschool students do not receive public funding for home education expenses.<sup>46</sup> Homeschool students may qualify for a college scholarship or a dual enrollment grant through Tennessee's Lottery Scholarship Program (see Exhibit 6); however, the eligibility requirements are different than for public school students and students who attend Category 1, 2, 3, and 1-SP non-public schools.<sup>J, 47</sup> (See Exhibit 1.) Currently, homeschool students' grade point averages (GPAs) cannot be used to qualify for lottery scholarships because home schools are not considered "eligible" schools.<sup>48</sup> Eligible schools are schools from which state law allows students to transfer into a public school without loss of credit for completed work and without being tested for grade placement.<sup>49</sup> Eligible schools include Tennessee public secondary schools, Category 1, 2, or 3 non-public secondary schools, U.S. Department of Defense secondary schools, out-of-state public secondary schools located in counties bordering Tennessee that Tennessee residents are authorized to attend, and out-of-state boarding schools accredited by a regional accrediting association.<sup>50</sup> Homeschool students (and Category 4–6 non-public school students) cannot qualify for the Hope Access Grant. Eligibility for the other lottery scholarships is determined by their SAT or ACT scores. Homeschool students must have been homeschooled for the two years immediately preceding graduation in order to be eligible for lottery

**Exhibit 5: TSSAA Eligibility Requirements for Home Education Students**

Student Classification	Eligible to participate?
Independent homeschool students	Yes – unless they take courses at another school or are members of a homeschool athletic team.
Homeschool students registered or associated with a CRS	No
Homeschool students enrolled in a distance learning program through a nonpublic school	No
Homeschool students enrolled in a nonpublic school through a satellite program	No

Source: Tennessee Secondary Schools Athletic Association, *2011–2012 TSSAA Handbook*, July 19, 2011, p. 52, <http://www.tssaa.org> (accessed Oct. 19, 2011); Bernard Childress, Executive Director, Tennessee Secondary Schools Athletic Association, telephone interview, Dec. 12, 2011.

<sup>J</sup> Category 1-SP schools are Special Purpose schools encompassing some pre-kindergarten programs and transient care facilities serving Department of Children's Services students.

scholarships.<sup>51</sup> If homeschool students are enrolled in at least 12 semester hours of college-level courses, they can use the GPA for their college courses to qualify for the General Assembly Merit Scholarship.<sup>K, 52</sup>

In many states, homeschool students can qualify for state higher education scholarships using SAT/ACT scores (e.g., Florida, Kentucky, and Arkansas). At least one state, South Carolina, allows homeschool students to use GPAs to qualify for the state's Hope Lottery Scholarship, but requires a significant validation process:

1. Homeschool students must submit grades to either a homeschool association or local public school district (whichever homeschool students are registered through);
2. Grades must be verified by the homeschool association or school district (e.g., a homeschool association could require students to submit work samples, test results, portfolios, etc.);
3. The homeschool association/school district must use South Carolina's Uniform Grading Policy to convert the grades into a GPA;
4. The homeschool association/school district must validate the GPA before it can be sent to a college or university; and
5. Finally, the college/university will determine the student's eligibility for the Hope Scholarship.<sup>53</sup>

Homeschool students must be enrolled in their school for at least two years "immediately preceding graduation" in order to qualify for a lottery scholarship.<sup>54</sup> This requirement was added to the state law during a time when public school students needed **both** a GPA and ACT/SAT score to qualify for the lottery scholarship. Then, as now, homeschool students could qualify based on ACT/SAT score alone. The intent of the requirement

was to prevent public school students with low GPAs from dropping out of public high school to be homeschooled their senior year in order to qualify for the lottery scholarship. Under the current law, if a student transfers from a public or non-public school to a homeschool during or after their junior year of high school so that at the time of their high school graduation they will have been homeschooled for less than two years, the student is not eligible for a lottery scholarship.

#### Other Homeschool Policy Issues

Policy issues relative to homeschooling continue to arise in other states, including:

1. Public funding for homeschooling (e.g., tax credits, reimbursement for education expenses, vouchers);
2. Access to public school resources for homeschool students (e.g., textbooks, teachers) – some school districts in other states have created homeschool centers where homeschool students can access public school resources such as textbooks and instruction from public school teachers, and independent study programs where home-schools are satellite campuses of public schools;
3. Training for truancy officers and other public employees on homeschooling laws and policies (e.g., attendance requirements for homeschool students);
4. Collaboration and communication between homeschool students, school district personnel, and state government personnel;
5. Annual deadlines for parents to register with the local Director of Schools to homeschool;
6. Homeschool curriculum guidelines/requirements.

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<sup>K</sup> There is currently no data available at the state level on the number of home educated students who have received dual enrollment grants or lottery scholarships.

**Exhibit 6: Initial Student Eligibility for Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarships and Dual Enrollment Grants\***

Name	Description	Public School and Category 1-3 Non-Public School Student Eligibility	Homeschool and Category 4-6 Non-Public School Student Eligibility
<b>Hope Scholarship</b>	Merit-based scholarship - \$6,000 per year at four-year institutions and \$3,000 per year at two-year institutions.	21 ACT (or 980 SAT) <i>or</i> 3.0 minimum weighted GPA	21 ACT <i>or</i> 980 SAT
<b>General Assembly Merit Scholarship</b>	\$1,500 per year to supplement Hope Scholarship.	3.75 minimum weighted GPA <i>and</i> 29 ACT (or 1280 SAT). Courses must meet minimum degree requirements other than those pertaining to Physical Education classes.	3.0 minimum GPA in at least 4 college-level courses totaling at least 12 semester hours <i>and</i> 29 ACT (or 1280 SAT)
<b>Aspire Award</b>	\$2,250 per year to supplement Hope Scholarship.	Meet Hope Scholarship requirements <i>and</i> have an adjusted gross income of \$36,000 or less.	Same.
<b>Hope Access Grant</b>	Merit- and need-based scholarship - \$1,375 per semester at four-year institutions and \$875 per semester at two-year institutions.	18–20 ACT (or 860–970 SAT) <i>and</i> 2.75 minimum weighted GPA <i>and</i> have an adjusted gross income of \$36,000 or less.	Do not qualify.
<b>Dual Enrollment Grant</b>	Grant for high school students to use to enroll in courses at postsecondary institutions in Tennessee while still in high school.	For one course per semester: admitted and enrolled in an eligible postsecondary institution <i>and</i> a Tennessee resident <i>and</i> have met all the requirements of the 10 <sup>th</sup> grade <i>and</i> is classified as an 11 <sup>th</sup> or 12 <sup>th</sup> grader <i>and</i> maintain a 2.75 minimum GPA for all postsecondary courses attempted.  For an additional course per semester: Meet all the requirements above <i>and</i> the Hope Scholarship academic requirements.	Same.

Note: \*Rates are for students who were entering freshmen in 2009 or later.

Source: Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, “Tennessee Hope Scholarship,” <http://www.tn.gov/CollegePays> (accessed Mar. 9, 2012); Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, “General Assembly Merit Scholarship,” <http://www.tn.gov/CollegePays> (accessed Mar. 9, 2012); Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, “Aspire Award,” <http://www.tn.gov/CollegePays> (accessed Mar. 9, 2012); Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, “Hope Access Grant,” <http://www.tn.gov/CollegePays> (accessed Mar. 9, 2012); Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, “Dual Enrollment Grant,” <http://www.tn.gov/CollegePays> (accessed Mar. 9, 2012).

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