

Welcome to **HOMESCHOOLING**

A Guide to Getting Started



This guide is compiled and provided by:

TIME 4 LEARNING®.com
and Time4Learning Parents

Gain a better understanding on how and where to begin homeschooling, making the right decisions, and much more...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Seven Steps to Start Homeschooling	3
1. Compliance with State Laws	6
2. Get Ready... Deschool!	7
3. Pick a Curriculum and Get Started	9
4. Get Social. Learn From Others	12
5. Layer in Tutors, Supplements, and Support	14
6. Dream Big, Passion Projects	16
7. Enjoy the Journey	17
Frequently Asked Questions	19
Homeschooling Glossary	21
Information on Time4learning	24

OVERVIEW:

The Seven Steps to Start Homeschooling

This section presents *The Seven Steps to Homeschooling*. Some steps are necessary, such as complying with your state laws and choosing a curriculum. Others are highly recommended by experienced homeschoolers to help both you and your child more quickly discover the benefits of homeschooling.

But first, for clarity, we'd like to explain that there are three educational systems that are frequently confused these days. We'll start by distinguishing them since they are very different:



School from Home or Remote Schooling. These are the systems that brick-and-mortar schools put together in 2020 when they started operating with the students at home. It's been hard for the schools to retrain their teachers, to deal with their own regulatory restrictions, and to build the IT infrastructure. This has been very rough on many families. It is NOT homeschooling.



Virtual Schools. These are schools designed for the students to do from home. There are public, private, and charter virtual schools. There are schools with principals, teachers, and all the formal tests and schedules. This is also NOT homeschooling.



Homeschooling. In homeschooling, the parents take responsibility for the children's education and play several roles: school principal, teacher, and curriculum director. Fortunately, in the modern world with the internet, the materials that the students would have studied if they were in school are just a few clicks away.

The guide presents *The Seven Steps to Start Homeschooling* as sequential, but in reality, it's seven things to think about and the order in which you should start thinking about them. The guide ends with suggestions of where else to look for resources, a Glossary, some FAQs, and some info on Time4Learning.

Each of the seven steps outlined below will be discussed in a separate chapter.

Step 1 - Comply with homeschooling laws, educational standards, and credentials.

Step 2 - Get ready during a transition period when students deschool and parents prepare.

Step 3 - Pick a curriculum, get started, and observe your child as a student.

Step 4 - Get social, get involved, and learn from other homeschoolers.

Step 5 - Layer in tutors, supplements, and other programs.

Step 6 - Incorporate passion projects.

Step 7 - Enjoy the journey and stay focused on what matters.

While this might appear to be overwhelming, it falls naturally into place when you take them a step at a time and at a proper pace. For instance, steps 2 and 3, watching your children start working on their core curriculum while talking to other parents about different approaches, should last several several weeks, maybe a month. Then, you can start making adjustments and layering in supplements and tutors over a few months. But it takes six months or a year before most people start really thinking about passion projects. So while we are laying out a roadmap, the point is for you to have a structure, not to feel like you should do all that in the first few weeks or months.

Step 1: Compliance with State Laws

One of the first steps is to find out about your state's homeschooling laws. Homeschooling is legal in every one of the 50 states, but each state has their own set of requirements and guidelines that must be followed; some more stringent than others, but all perfectly doable. Many homeschoolers make a point of covering the same materials (standards) that the schools cover, which simplifies an eventual return to public schools. Also, there are some compliance questions related to high schoolers who should make sure to finish high school with the credentials and credibility in place for whatever they want to do next.

Step 2: Get Ready... Deschool!

The next step is one you've probably already started, and that's to get ready and begin researching what homeschooling is all about. This step also involves getting your children ready to homeschool by *deschooling* them, in other words, to start thinking outside the classroom, because homeschooling is

different. During this phase, the parent is working both on Step 1, Compliance and Step 3, picking a curriculum.

Step 3: Pick a Curriculum and Get Started

While there are literally thousands of choices, we'll boil it down to a few key factors and focus on starting with the foundation before you add in supplements. We'll help you understand the importance of observing your child and how he or she learns before spending big bucks.

Step 4: Get Social. Learn From Others

When we are learning about a new topic, one of the first things we do is ask others who are familiar with that subject matter, and that's what Step 4 entails. Learning from others serves many purposes. You'll discover you're not alone and there are many families out there who have been in your shoes and are more than happy to help you with companionship, advice, and some shared homeschool programs.



Step 5: Layer in Tutors, Supplements, and Support

As you progress in your homeschool and you and your child begin to get settled, you'll discover that you want to do more. Maybe your child wants to learn more about a particular topic you've been covering. Perhaps he or she is in need of extra help with a subject or two. This is the time to consider adding in supplements to your homeschool. Maybe it's in the form of a tutor, a few co-op classes, extracurriculars, or even project-based learning.

Step 6: Dream Big, Passion Projects

Is there a hobby, topic, or issue your child is interested in and curious to learn more about? Now that you're homeschooling, you'll find that with so much flexibility, your child will be able to finally dive into a passion like acting, volunteering, or anything else that has been piquing their interest. Many families incorporate these types of self-led learning projects into their homeschool to mix things up and give their child control of what they learn.

Step 7: Enjoy the Journey

The final step is about maintaining a healthy attitude, enjoying yourself, and taking it all in. Don't seek out perfection, or attempt to be like that seemingly perfect homeschooling family you met a few weeks ago. It will all be a learning process, especially in the beginning. Be flexible, encourage your child, and don't be afraid to try new things.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is a *new* idea where the family takes responsibility for educating the child. It's a "new" idea only in that in the 1900s, Americans were so accustomed to institutional schools that the idea of homeschooling seemed radical. But by the end of the 1990s, each state passed laws legalizing homeschooling although there are some compliance rules. One other thing to know is that homeschooled children statistically have slightly better outcomes than their peers in traditional schools. The incoming classes at Harvard and Yale are 3-4% homeschoolers, roughly the same percentage of kids being homeschooled. This is true across most competitive and regional higher educational systems across the country.



STEP 1:

Compliance with State Laws

Homeschooling is legal in all 50 states: Each state has its own rules about how to register as a homeschooler and the requirements for studying, testing, and record-keeping. Some states specify the subjects to be taught, some specify the amount of time to be spent studying in terms of days and hours per day. Here is the [Time4Learning state law directory](#), one of many online guides.

In Florida, for example, the primary way to homeschool is to send a letter to your school district about your intent to homeschool. You can do this at the start or middle of a school year. Then, you are obliged to keep records, a student portfolio, about your student's studies. Nobody has the right to see these records, which is interesting. Thirdly, your child must be assessed annually either by taking standardized tests or most often, by having a licensed teacher review your students' portfolio or meet with your student for an hour. An alternative to registering as a homeschooler with the state of FL, is to enroll in a cover school (also referred to as an umbrella school). These schools operate as private schools but mostly exist to fulfill the legal requirements, which also gives some level of advice to homeschoolers. Most cost just a few hundred dollars per year. If you enroll in a cover school, there is no need to notify your school district.

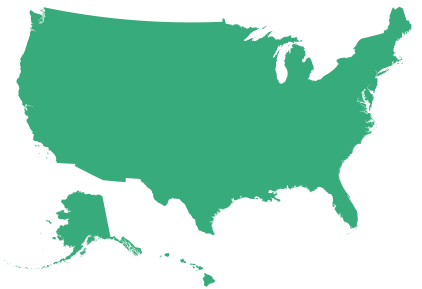
In Texas, as a second example, there are no paperwork requirements. The law requires:

- A bona fide instruction for the student.
- The curriculum to be visual in nature (such as textbooks, workbooks, online programs, etc.).
- The following subjects to be covered: reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and citizenship.

A second set of compliance issues relates to whether you expect to move your child back into the school system. If you do, you should largely

cover the same materials in the same grades as your school to make that transition easier. In most cases, this is easier than you think as long as you pick a “standards-based curriculum”. Educational standards for each grade and subject are set by each state and are published on the state educational website. These standards form the goals of what each teacher and curriculum are aiming to teach and what the standardized tests are designed to measure. Most school districts strictly follow the state's standards.

A third set of considerations related to compliance with external expectations has to do with high school. As a homeschooler, parents are free to sign the homeschool diploma when they feel a high school program is complete. An important part of designing a high school curriculum is to make sure that you are meeting the credential requirements for whatever your post high school plans are. If your student has a specific college in mind, check out their minimum entrance requirements as you chart out your high school plan. Depending on your student's post secondary academic or career path plans, you may want to have established some additional credentials. As an example, some high school students get their high school diploma and their associates degree at the same time in a process called dual enrollment. They then apply to a 4-year program, with the advantage of a proven institutional track record and already earned college credits. Homeschool.com has a [dual enrollment guide](#) that can provide you with more information on that process.



STEP 2: Get Ready... Deschool!

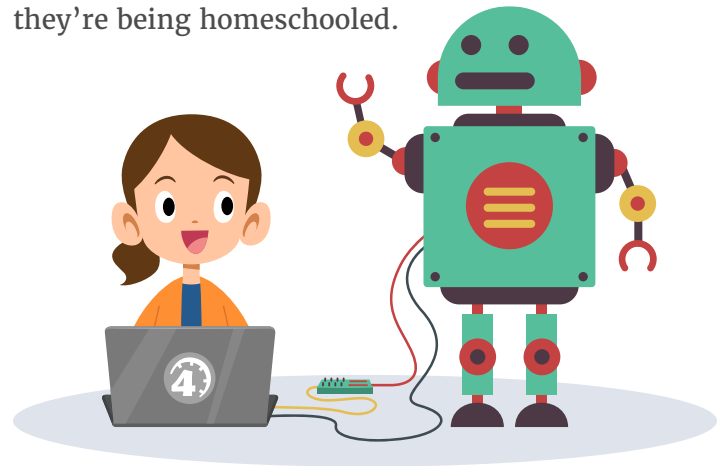
Okay. You've decided to homeschool. You've read your state's homeschooling laws, and you have a checklist of things you need to do. What should you have your child do first? For many, the best first thing for them to do is... nothing.

Have you ever heard the term *deschool*? Think of it as hitting the reset button on what both you and your child have come to think of as school. This involves a period of time where your child does no school work in order to clear the mind and their notion of what school has been or should be.

Deschooling is important to break with the school mindset of students being told what to do everyday and being closely supervised by teachers. While the kids should mostly relax that week, parents should discuss that homeschooling will be very different from being in school. One difference is a change in mindset from school being a place that you go where most of your curriculum is established for you, to a mentality where education becomes an interactive experience where responsibilities and ideas for approach can largely sit with the student. Homeschooling will be different from formal schooling and it's important for both parents and students to recognize that they have a role in organizing it and in making it successful. There will be experiments about what works, some successes, some failures, and lots of second tries. Homeschool.com's free book, [Homeschooling and Loving It](#), would be useful for both parents and students to read during that week (estimated time to read: 2 hours) in that it shows how parents can help their students take some leadership in their education.

Whether your child is excited to start homeschooling or not, start the deschooling process by giving him or her a week off. They'll love the time off from any type of school, and this will give them time to mentally prepare and look forward

to this new way of learning. During this week, you'll probably be busy finishing up any regulatory filings, figuring out what curriculum to use (see the next section), and learning about education generally and homeschooling specifically. During the deschooling vacation, ask the child to pick one project or some area that they want to study. Although you are the teacher, it's important to encourage your kids to take more of an initiative with their education now that they're being homeschooled.



We also want you to think of this week as an opportunity to maybe adjust your approach to parenting, a chance to break the cycle of interactions that perhaps haven't been working between you and your child. Of course, maybe everything is great in your house in which case, skip this paragraph. But if you have some repetitive, negative patterns and are perhaps thinking of your children as more childlike than they currently are, this is a good time to adjust. Perhaps try to start treating your child as older than he or she is and both raise expectations for them to take responsibility and to back off on too-close supervision.

Chris, a homeschool dad of three, admitted that he wasn't really prepared for how different the mindset between traditional school and homeschool was.

When we first withdrew our kids from school, we jumped right in picking up exactly where they were in the school curriculum. We created a classroom at home and followed the same school day schedule they were used to. My wife and I assumed the roles of teacher... To summarize, it didn't work. It felt weird plus the kids really didn't like us acting like their school teachers and there was too much time spent on lesson planning for us. None of us were happy. We were tired and the kids were miserable. Just before we thought we were going to throw in the towel, we were fortunate to join a homeschool group. When sharing our struggles, we got some great advice: Stop. It almost never works to try to recreate the school model at home. You have plenty of time. Declare a vacation. Relax. Breathe. Then try again with approaches that feel more natural to your family.

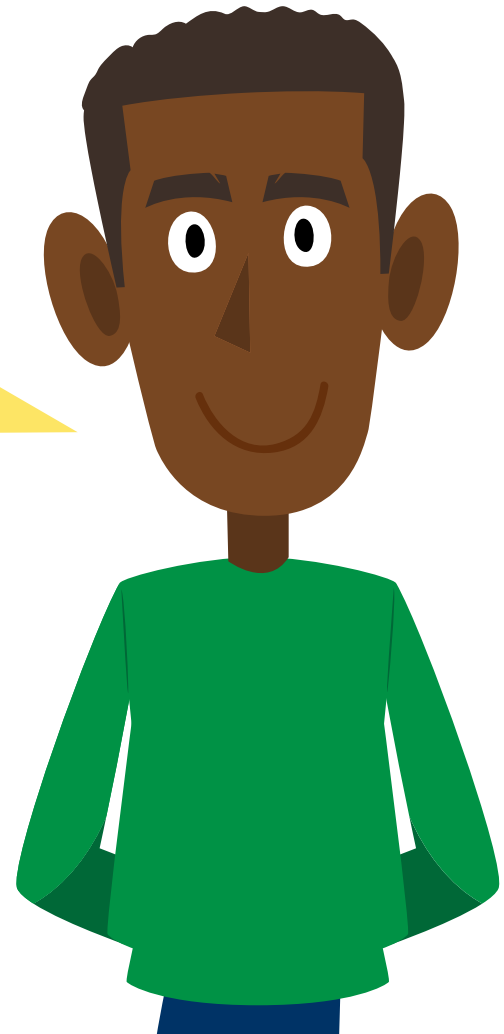
We didn't know it was called "deschooling" at the time but it was exactly what we needed. We took a couple weeks and put the plans away. We started our day reading out loud as a family and the kids basically did what they wanted for a few weeks. When we were ready to get back into homeschooling, we all had a better understanding of what our days could look like instead of preconceived notions about what they should look like. Total game changer!

Chris's experience touches on some key points that we'd like to highlight for you:

- Homeschooling won't take as long as traditional classroom schooling. There aren't class schedules/transitions, there's no formal break periods, etc. Most homeschoolers find that they teach and learn in a half a day,

what it takes schools an entire day to cover. Many families finish their core subjects before lunch, leaving the afternoon for the fun extras!

- Take some time to really watch your kids. What are they interested in, and can you build unit studies and learning resources around those interests? How do they learn best? Where are their strengths and challenges? If one child is stronger in math than in reading, you know you need to spend more time with reading reinforcement. Get to know your children in a whole new light!
- The parent role in homeschooling is generally more of a facilitator and not a full time teacher instructor. Being a full time teacher is too hard, not necessary, and there are usually, better approaches.



STEP 3:

Pick a Curriculum and Get Started

Choosing a homeschooling curriculum can be intimidating! After all, this *is* your child's education at stake. A simple search on homeschooling may leave you feeling a bit like Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, caught in a whirlwind of varying information and opinions! How on earth are you to determine which is best for **your** child?

Now that you are familiar with your state's laws and any required subjects, here are a few tips we've gathered from our homeschooling parents to help you sort through all your options.

Mind Your Pennies: In other words, use caution in spending too much money up front. Don't jump in making a huge investment or get locked into a year-long contract. A way-too-common problem is purchasing a full year of curriculum only to find that your student loathes it; or it's not the right grade level; or it's too cumbersome for your family. More expensive does not equal a higher quality education.

Reality Check: A suggestion we come across often is to be honest with yourself and *know your limits*. How much time do you have to devote to lesson planning, necessary prep work, teaching, grading, etc? Do you have multiple children? Do you work? Other obligations to consider? Some parents start by thinking that they will "roll their own" curriculum combining the best free materials from many different places. A few weeks in, frazzled and exhausted, many switch to an integrated system as their foundation.

While there appear to be hundreds, make that, thousands of choices of curriculum, the reality is simpler. There are really a few basic decisions that will guide your choice:

Comprehensive or Narrow Curriculum? At first glance, parents can be overwhelmed by the lists of curriculum choices. However, by taking it a

step at a time, you can make sense of all these choices. Start by putting in a broad comprehensive curriculum that covers the four major subjects for all the grades: math, language arts, science, and social studies. Once you start looking for that, you'll realize that most curriculums are "narrow", covering only a specific grade or a specific subject or even just a part of a subject. A curriculum might just be kindergarten through second grade math. Or it might focus just on practicing the times tables or math facts. Remember that *language arts* can be segmented into many narrow subjects: phonics, reading comprehension, literature, vocabulary, spelling, writing, grammar, usage, and mechanics.



We recommend that people start homeschooling with a foundation made up of a comprehensive curriculum, such as Time4Learning, that covers all their subjects and children. Then, supplement as necessary (which we explain in Steps 5 and 6) with narrow curriculum, supplements, or tutors. While some people think that a narrow curriculum, such as one focused on phonics might be superior, there are many advantages to having a strong phonics program which is already integrated with the vocabulary, verbal comprehension, and other aspects of a comprehensive language arts program.

HOW TO SUPERVISE YOUR CHILD

As a parent, you already know how to coach or supervise your children or at least, you have a system. Now that you will be homeschooling, you might rethink your system. Will your child be learning with you in the same room? Will you be tracking their progress against the schedule daily? Will you be looking at assessment scores and following up to make sure that deficits are addressed? Will you be looking at the lesson and discussing them with your children to check on and deepen their understanding? Together, you will have to experiment to find the right balance between having your child experience mistakes and guiding them in obtaining an advantage from these 'lessons learned'. Whether you are watching from a distance to see how focused he or she is, or checking reports to keep track of progress and grades, find what works best for you. If you discover that your student is unable to obtain understanding or reaches a point of frustration, step back and reevaluate. You may uncover learning gaps from his/her previous schooling. Since many of the core subjects are building blocks, these gaps can hinder their progress. Alternatively, your child may grasp concepts quickly and become bored. Make changes as you see fit!

Printed Versus Online? Textbooks and workbooks make up the printed category. In the modern era, most kids prefer to have the larger chunk done online because it's more engaging. Trying to follow a textbook can be really boring and bored children don't learn. Parents prefer online not only for the engagement, but also for the automated grading and reporting. One variation of the printed curriculum is the "curriculum in a box." These were dominant in the homeschooling community before online grew popular. They tended to have teacher guides that included a detailed script for the parent to read outloud,

followed by readings by the students and student workbooks. The parent does all of the grading. A year's curriculum of this sort is hundreds of dollars up front, which is a big risk since many families don't take to these systems.

PICKING A CURRICULUM

There are hundreds of curriculum choices which you can research on curriculum directories and review sites. As part of your research, we would urge you to spend time watching lesson demos. In fact, maybe show the demos to your children and get their reaction. Also, you should visit any parent groups associated with the curriculum to get a feel for the tone of discussions, as well as check out online reviews.

Religiously Focused or Not? In the U.S., maybe half of the homeschoolers pre-pandemic were people who wanted a Christian-Biblical based education. There is a great deal of homeschool curriculum which is very Christian-oriented. Many parents prefer to keep their education and religion separate, many others prefer it combined.

Time4Learning is the curriculum to start with if you are interested in a product that:

- Largely matches the standard materials taught in school across all 50 states.
- Instructs with short, engaging, interactive lessons (animated or video, rarely text).
- Integrates skill-building and critical thinking exercises and applications.
- Broadly and rigorously covers from PreK-12th, the four major subjects, plus high school electives.
- Has helped over a million children over the last 15 years.
- Has automated lesson planning, scheduling, grading, and record keeping.
- Has a two-week, money-back guarantee, month-to-month billing, no up-front enrollment fee, and allows you to cancel anytime.

Tutors. Many families, particularly during the pandemic, are relying on tutors to manage their children's education. We'd suggest that tutors too will find that starting with Time4Learning as the educational foundation is worthwhile. The tutor's role will be to support, supervise, and supplement around it, rather than reinventing the wheel. This ensures that the tutor knows what has to be covered, gives you a structure of what has been taught in case you and the tutor don't stay together, and creates structured record-keeping. Most tutors will see the value of starting with a foundation of lessons and activities. Many tutors are now running "one room schoolhouses" in which each student spends some time working independently on Time4Learning and some time working in groups or directly with the tutor.

Once you have a plan laid out, a curriculum selected, and your child has taken time to relax and deschool, then it's time to get started. It's important to keep in mind that when starting a new curriculum there will be an adjustment period for your child **and** for you. Expect a learning curve as each of you becomes more familiar with the process and the way each subject is laid out. Even though you are there to teach and guide, allow your child time to adapt to this new way of learning... maybe even struggle a bit!

THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN

The preschool children on Time4Learning are often members because they want to do the same as their elder siblings. These kids typically start by sitting on an elder sibling or parent's lap for the first few days, with the young one pointing while the elder holds the mouse. Often in the next week, the kids will want to take the mouse and by the third week, they want to do it on their own. In educational circles, this is called "gradual release" or "I do, we do, you do". This is a good model for many lessons.

HOMESCHOOLING HIGH SCHOOLERS?

If so, you'll notice it's very different from the earlier grades during which students were learning and building foundational skills. But for high school, there are the added questions of planning and building credentials for your student's future. Also, most students are ready to take on a co-leadership role in deciding where they are headed, what they are going to learn to get there, and how they are going to learn it.

While even competitive colleges accept a lot of homeschooled students, they have widely varying attitudes towards homeschool transcripts. To address this, plan ahead and make inquiries about your targeted colleges attitudes towards credentials from homeschoolers. A high school plan might include taking courses at the local community college which, if you get high grades, goes a long way toward validating the quality of your student's academics. Other homeschooled high school students rely on their extra curricular activities and standardized test scores to build credibility. It's also important to be aware of what a specific college's minimum high school course requirements are. There is a lot of information on this topic, including different career and college planning tools, downloads, and templates on Homeschool.com's new [How to Homeschool High School](#) section.

Let us reassure you that it's not as scary as you might think! Have conversations with your students often. What are their plans for life post high school? Reach out to any colleges or universities that they're interested in and work with admissions counselors so you know what they require during the application process. This also makes building your high school curriculum and transcripts much easier.

STEP 4:

Get Social. Learn From Others

Homeschooling should not be an isolated endeavor. As many homeschool parents agree, a vital part of homeschooling success is the support, guidance, and friendships they have found in homeschooling groups and co-ops. Students too are thrilled that while they are leaving a school community, they are joining a homeschool community. Participation in a compatible homeschool support group is often the key to homeschool success.

“All of the laws, regulations, and information on where to start and what to do was overwhelming, but once I found a group that fit my family, I had all the support I needed to homeschool and love it.”

– Jennifer (Homeschool mom from Virginia)

Homeschool groups can be a wealth of information and resources for new and current homeschoolers, but how do you find one? What kinds of homeschool groups are there?

Homeschool groups come in all shapes and sizes: large or small, formal or informal, religious or secular, special-needs-oriented or not, and so on. Take time to pick the ones you are comfortable with, even if it means searching through several groups. Expect to visit five to ten local homeschool groups to find the two to three that you want to participate in. Two to

three? One might be for sports and nature/science. One might be your favorite, but a little too far to get to regularly. One might be “geographically desirable” and have kids of the right age.

Local homeschool groups are what most people usually think of first when starting to homeschool. These groups are location-specific groups of families that engage in group activities such as field trips, sports, weekly park days that offer play and socialization for the whole family, and co-op learning. These groups can be a fantastic part of the homeschooling experience. Every local homeschool group will be different and set their own rules and regulations for joining. You should expect to visit with half a dozen to find one or two where you like the fit. There are great directories of homeschool groups on A2ZHomeschooling.com. Google is also very helpful. Another way to find local groups is by asking your local librarians! Libraries are often a homeschool hub. Time4Learning has lists of local co-ops in specific [states](#) to also help you locate homeschool groups in your area.

You can find homeschool groups online as well. With the prevalence of Covid-19, online homeschool groups may be the way to start depending on your local situation. Many local groups that meet in person have an online presence (website, Facebook page, or Facebook group) to help you connect



and become part of their community. Strictly online homeschool groups do not have the same in-person option for support and socialization but they can help and provide you with ideas and advice. Online groups also have the advantage of being there at all hours of the day to assist you with homeschooling questions and struggles, and to offer camaraderie. Increasingly, online groups are offering the opportunity for virtual socialization with mommy night Zoom calls, group movie watching, and safe game server set-ups for homeschoolers to chat and play together. Some are even starting to offer online co-op classes to help their families connect and learn together from afar.

“Online chats with our homeschool groups have been a lifesaver during Covid. I get adult conversation and my kids get to have friend time all while still being safe at home.”

– Diana (Homeschool mom in Ohio)

Time4Learning has an active [Facebook Parents Group](#) (private, just ask to join) that is a great place to ask questions. There is also a [Time4Learning parents special needs support group](#). This online community discusses homeschooling resources that are supplements to Time4Learning along with tips and tricks for using Time4Learning and all other homeschooling topics.

Whether you decide on in-person, online, or a mixture of both, we recommend making sure that you find homeschooling groups that you and your child feel comfortable with.

Join Our Group on Facebook!

TIME 4 LEARNING®
Families



STEP 5:

Layer in Tutors, Supplements, and Support

When you first start homeschooling, pick a comprehensive curriculum that covers all the core subjects. Over time, perhaps two to six weeks, you'll notice both academic strengths and interests, and some areas where your children struggle. These observations provide the direction as you start looking at additional learning options.

Many families who use Time4Learning as their core homeschool curriculum, supplement it with other resources and programs. Here's how homeschooling mom and Time4Learning user, Kelly, supplements what her children are learning.



Starting with the language arts program, reading is very important to us so our schedule includes a weekly library visit to pick up new books. There is an hour of daily reading. Beginning readers read aloud to mom.

My children write in their journals each day for 15 minutes. We have rotating assignments throughout the week including summaries of books we've read, reflections on the weekend, and summary of lessons from Time4Learning. On Friday, they choose their favorite journal entry from the week, correct any spelling, punctuation, or grammar errors and write the edited version in their best penmanship. I have a handwriting program to develop fine motor skills and learn penmanship.

Our family uses Time4Learning for the bulk of our language arts curriculum. Time4Learning's language arts curriculum is thorough in its coverage of phonics, grammar, vocabulary, verbal comprehension and reading comprehension. If I feel my child needs additional practice on a certain language concept, I can usually find it in the Time4Learning language arts extensions. I use their scope and sequence to help me choose enrichment activities and to schedule them.

I have children with a range of math abilities and Time4Learning has been a good choice for all of them. I add math drills for the kids who need it.

Supplementing your core curriculum is vital for a rich education. Many of these supplements can either be done directly or in concert with other families through a homeschool co-op, pandemic pod, or just an informal relationship with other homeschooling families. Areas to consider:

- Tutors, often for math or writing
- [Project based learning](#) can help students take more initiative, develop research skills, and take a deeper look at topics that interest them.
- [High school electives](#)
- Fine Arts studies
 - [Art history and practice](#)
 - [Music history and lessons](#)
 - Drama/acting; movie and theatre
- [Physical education](#)
- Handwriting and typing

Here's how Jamie, who has been homeschooling for 15 years, supplements what her children are learning.

In our homeschool, we typically have a core curriculum that is composed of one or many different homeschool resources to which we supplement and enrich with a wide variety of free and budget-friendly options. Below are my favorite “go to” supplemental options: YouTube, Khan Academy, educational apps, local libraries and museums, textbooks and workbooks, homeschool co-ops, and local community colleges.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Students in middle school and high school should consider community service as part of their education. They can volunteer at an animal shelter, museum or hospital to learn more about a topic they are studying about or interested in. These opportunities are important both to learn about new areas and also to develop any budding career interests.

When it comes to supplementing, there is no “standard” practice or template to follow. You mold the curriculum around your educational vision, and your child’s strengths and weaknesses. Some children may enjoy a group setting, while others may prefer one-on-one teaching methods. The point is, there’s no wrong method – only the right method for your child.



STEP 6:

Dream Big, Passion Projects

Some families began homeschooling because of their child's passions. Whether they had a talent in music, excelled in a particular sport, or caught the acting bug, these families chose homeschooling as a way to create the time for the children to pursue these passions.

But let's be real, the majority of homeschoolers do not fall into this category. They are not traveling around the country as their children compete and perform. They are families just trying to figure out how homeschooling works.

However, after a few months or a year of homeschooling, many parents realize that their children have some real interests which can be taken to a whole new level because of the flexibility and efficiency of homeschooling. Or, some parents find that by asking their children if they have anything that they'd really like to study, some ideas emerge.

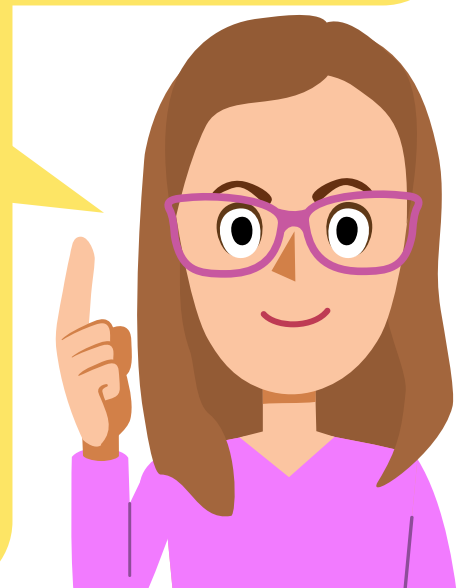
Katie, a mom of two boys, tells us how she not only encouraged her kids in their interests, but how she made it a part of their curriculum.

My boys have always been dreamers. My oldest told us when he was 4 that he was going to be a chef. Not once, in his entire life, did he waiver. Everything he did on his own time revolved around food. We figured out early on that so much of what he was learning could be subjects in and of themselves. We made baking a math lesson (fractions!). Pairing spices with the right ingredients was science. Portions and combinations? Health. His reading comprehension skills were built with recipe books.

In time, he was leading co-op classes and participating in 4H so he could complete at the state level. At 16, he started his own business and because he made a name for himself in our community, was headhunted by local restaurateurs and had multiple job offers by the time he turned 18. Before his 21st birthday, he was made Assistant GM and now runs a kitchen.

My youngest has always been interested in music, and learning a new instrument comes easily to him. It's a little harder to incorporate music into his curriculum, but one way we've managed it is with unit studies and project based learning. We've built studies around musicians in history, learning about instruments of the era, how they're made (and building our own!), and more.

He's now 16 and is mastering his 6th instrument - acoustic guitar, electric guitar, bass, keyboard, accordion, and most recently, the saxophone. Between time with a private tutor, an online video subscription for lessons, recording songs with friends over Zoom, and just practicing, he spends hours a day on his music. He's currently in 11th grade and we all honestly feel like if he were in traditional school, there'd simply be no way he could devote that much time to his craft.



Since homeschoolers find that they can do their necessary school work in less than half the time that schools typically require, they have more flexibility in their schedule. So whether that means doing school in the evenings or even on weekends, you can tailor your child's education and schedule accordingly.

When you think outside the box, and start combining the things they WANT to do with things they NEED to do, you'll see them thrive.

STEP 7: Enjoy the Journey

Homeschooling is going to be one of those chapters in your family's life that you will never forget. There will be good days and bad days, and like parenting, you will do a whole lot of learning along the way. You'll realize that you're capable of so much and discover that your kids are more amazing and gifted than what you already thought.

An ancient truism that is vitally important in homeschooling is: Focus on the positive and the wonderful in your child. As Mary, an experienced homeschooling Mom taught the Time4Learning staff when she visited,

"In Mary's world, we celebrate everything about our children. Everyday, I find reasons to celebrate them."

Well, what about the fact that your child has weak vocabulary or grammar skills or hasn't mastered a particular math concept? These issues will have to be dealt with in due course. We're not saying to ignore them. We're saying that your obsession should be the positive things about your children, not their challenges. It is an all-too-common mistake for parents to over focus on their children's weaknesses and not take time to acknowledge their strengths.

Take things one step a time, especially as you start. Don't rush it or be too hard on yourself or your children. Be a strength finder, not a critic. This doesn't mean that everything you say to them is all fluffy unicorns and rainbows. However, correcting them in a positive way can make a huge difference. Words of affirmation and encouragement are like a

turbo-charge to their motivation!

A good bit of advice is to always be sure to deal with the child in front of you, not the one that you were, not the one you wish you had, and not the one you had last year. Remember that children grow and change, and that includes their likes and dislikes. A curriculum that worked well last year might be a terrible fit this year. Be flexible... nothing has to be set in stone.

Finally, throughout your journey, make it a point to meet other homeschoolers and learn from them, but don't compare yourself. You don't have to do it all or teach everything. There are so many different and exciting avenues to explore and learn from. Think outside the box when it comes to homeschooling and after you get going, feel free to innovate. You really can learn everything from anything.



For a few final words of wisdom, let's go back to Jamie, who's been homeschooling her six children for over 15 years:

One thing I've discovered over the course of our homeschool journey is that homeschool learning should be fluid, flexible and adaptable. I refer to this as a growth mindset in my homeschool. I try to keep my finger on the pulse of what we accomplish, and that includes what my students are learning and how they feel about it. It's our task as parents to keep learning relevant to our child's unique needs, and this means that we should be ready to learn, adapt and improve our homeschooling process as needed. Staying in tune with everyone in this way takes a great deal of "withitness" but will be worth the effort in the long run.

This doesn't mean that we change our core curriculum all the time, far from it. It does mean that we keep tabs on what is working and what isn't and be ready and willing to adjust accordingly. Sometimes it's just a matter of being burnt out on a particular approach -- what was once exciting and interesting feels stale and boring after a few semesters. Many families rotate curriculum and approaches so that every semester there is the thrill of a novel approach. In fact, in our homeschool, we school year round rotating the subjects that we cover using Time4Learning, text books, project-based learning, and courses through the co-op.



FAQs:

for New Homeschoolers

“Is homeschooling in the middle of a pandemic a good plan?”

The Covid19 pandemic is filled with uncertainty. Although no one has all the answers, it's important that we keep our children safe, give them a sense of security, and a daily routine that they can look forward to. Many parents chose to homeschool to avoid the constantly changing plans of their local schools. Deciding to homeschool for a school year or two gives a family structure and a chance to take control and focus on an exciting new endeavor. It's “being served lemons and making lemonade.”

“Can you start homeschooling at any time?”

Once you've made the decision to homeschool, you can start doing so any time, even if the school year has already started. Just be sure to follow your state's guidelines when it comes to a notice of intent and check with your school district to find out if there are any steps you must take to withdraw your child from school.

“My child won't pay attention to his remote schooling for an hour. Why would online homeschooling work?”

This is a great but tough question. While many teachers can lead an engaging class discussion in person, over the net it's lifeless and dull (Frankly, some teachers are dull in person too). An interesting question for parents to ponder is why can your child spend hours totally engrossed with a game on the screen but can't sit still at all listening to a lecture. The answer is the interactivity and the challenge. A system like Time4Learning is probably halfway between the extremes and while

there's no rapid fire interactivity, it is built around realistic expectations of children's attention spans. It should also be noted that attention deficits are a real issue and many parents have to make creative adjustments to students abilities.

“Is there funding available for homeschoolers?”

While there is no federal funding for homeschooling, some states offer different options for homeschooling which are covered/paid for by the government. For example, in California you can [join a charter school with an Independent Study Program](#) where funding is available for curriculum and teaching but have to meet certain requirements on testing and method. In Florida, there is the [Step up to Students Gardiner Scholarships](#), and in Arizona, the [Empowerment Scholarship Account \(ESA\)](#) with funding for special needs homeschoolers (also for military families in AZ).

“What qualifications do you need to homeschool your child?”

This varies from state to state. Most states don't have any requirements while a few require a minimum of a high school diploma or GED. For example, parents [homeschooling in Washington state](#) must either have earned 45 college credits, attend a Parent Qualifying Course, or work with a certified teacher who meets with the student on a weekly basis. In other states such as Texas, there are no qualifications expected of parents.

“How much does it cost to homeschool?”

[Homeschooling costs](#) vary depending on a number of factors including the curriculum you use, the number of field trips you plan on taking,

extracurricular activities your child takes part in, etc. Families who are thinking about homeschooling should consider all the costs associated with homeschooling as well as some hidden costs so they can budget accordingly and save money in the process.

“Is homeschooling more efficient than public school?”

The answer to this question is subjective, but many would agree that there are pros and cons associated with both. It's important to take several factors into consideration when determining if [homeschooling is more effective than public school](#), such as: flexibility, cost, socialization, etc. With homeschooling, you typically have endless flexibility when it comes to what and when your child learns.

“Do homeschooled students perform better?”

Studies have shown that homeschooled students perform better on tests and score higher overall than their public school peers. Admittedly, these studies were mostly pursued by homeschool advocates, The same statistics hold true once they go on to colleges and universities.

“Do colleges accept homeschooled students?”

Yes, most colleges are now homeschool-friendly. Some colleges and universities seek out homeschooled students. For more information on college entrance requirements and application processes for homeschool, look at LetsHomeschoolHighschool's [homeschool friendly colleges and universities](#).

“Can homeschooled students get scholarships?”

Of course! Homeschoolers are eligible for many different [college scholarships](#). From need based to athletic to career-specific, there are tons of

scholarships that homeschoolers can apply for. Be sure to do your research and be mindful of application deadlines and other requirements.

“Can I start homeschooling mid-year?”

It is completely possible to [begin homeschooling in the middle of the school year](#)! In fact, this is very common amongst accidental homeschoolers. However, the process for doing so will vary from state to state. Depending on your state's curriculum requirements (if they have any), you may need to continue the subjects your child was previously enrolled in.

“Can my homeschooler enlist in the military?”

Yes! Your homeschooler can enlist in the military, as long as his or her parent or guardian awards the student a high school diploma. It is illegal for the military to decline a student solely because he or she was homeschooled. This is due to homeschool lobbying that influenced congressional amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act in 2012 and 2014.

“How long does homeschooling take per day?”

This will vary from student to student and from state to state. Depending on your state's laws, there may be an attendance hour requirement. If you are adhering to a standard school year, which is 180 days of schooling, schooling will take 5 hours per day, 5 days a week. Those 5 hours can include the typical subjects, sports, life skills, reading, etc. However, if your state's laws do not have an attendance requirement, time spent homeschooling can vary. Work with your children to see what works best for them; some students may want to spend 2 hours per day for 7 days a week, and others may want to finish their work in three eight-hour days. It may take a few weeks to get a schedule going, and that's okay!

GLOSSARY

of Homeschooling Terms

As you are beginning this journey, you have probably already noticed that homeschoolers have a language of their own. Here are some terms and definitions that will help you make sense of the new concepts and lingo.

Accidental Homeschooler – A term coined by Time4Learning to describe the homeschoolers who start on the homeschool path somewhat accidentally, more through a process of elimination of educational options than a desire to homeschool.

Boxed Curriculum – There are programs for purchase that provide homeschool families with a comprehensive scope and sequence, textbooks, assessments, projects, and timelines.

Charlotte Mason Education – Charlotte Mason style education is a lifelong leisurely and self-directed quest based on observation, reflection, discussion, and journaling. Miss Mason was a 19th century educator who focused on education based on nature, literature, and the arts.

Classical Curriculum – Classical households, seeking a Classical Education, generally require extremely structured schedules and lesson plans.

Classical Education – A process of teaching children to learn based on developmental phases and educational principles developed by the ancient Greeks. For the primary years, children learn fact-based information. In the middle school years, children learn logic and reasoning, and in the high school period, children develop the art of abstraction and persuasion, also referred to as “trivium-based.”

Common Core (Common Core State

Standards, CCSS) – A set of standards adopted by states to bring consistency in education across the country. The standards were adopted to ensure that all students are college- and career-ready by the end of high school.

Compulsory Attendance/Education – Refers to the ages during which the state requires students to receive formal education.

Cooperative (Co-Op) – A collective group of homeschoolers working together for a common purpose. All members of the co-op must contribute in some way toward the end goal, usually this contribution is in the form of effort, not money.

Cover School – A school that enrolls homeschooling children or families and offers services supportive of home education. This type of school is also known as an “Umbrella School.” In some states, the term “Church School” may also be used.

Curriculum – The materials used for a course, which can include a textbook, a teacher and grading guide, lesson plans, tests, or worksheets. In an online curriculum, some of these elements can be integrated and automated.

Deschooling – Deschooling refers to the period of time, also called decompression, when a student (and family) adjusts after leaving a traditional school setting. This period can cover several weeks.

Eclectic Approach – A method of teaching that does not rely on any one curriculum or approach but blends them for each child. Eclectic has become a popular, perhaps dominant, approach to homeschooling.

Gifted – (see also Twice-Gifted) – A term used to describe exceptionally bright and talented children. Homeschooling offers a unique opportunity for parents to tailor their education to their children’s particular gifts and needs.

Homeschooling – Education in which the parent takes primary responsibility as opposed to an institution like a private, public, or parochial school. Homeschooling is legal in all 50 states.

Homeschool Support Group (Also Homeschool Group or Parent Support Group) – A group of homeschoolers who interact on a regular basis for the purpose of networking, sharing resources and energy, providing opportunities for socialization and co-teaching. Some support groups are virtual (i.e., internet-based), but the majority have physical locations and meetings.

Inclusive – An “inclusive” homeschool group accepts and includes all homeschoolers, no matter what their beliefs or reasons for seeking an alternative to “traditional” education.

Journaling or Lapbooking (see also Notebooking) – An educational method where students have regular writing assignments either in a notebook or “mini-books”. It provides structure for writings, drawings, timelines, pictures, graphs, or stories on topics of current study or other observations. It’s sort of an educational diary.

Literature-based – A type of homeschooling style that uses written materials to achieve learning. Specifically, this is done through reading an author’s narrative and expository writing. Subjects like history are taught with this style as it can help homeschoolers envision themselves in the books they are reading.

Montessori – A homeschooling style that heavily emphasizes learning life skills rather than strict, rigid academic objectives. Self-directed activity,

hands-on learning, and collaborative play are all encouraged. This approach was created by Dr. Maria Montessori based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood.

Notebooking (see also Lapbooking) – A homeschooling activity where (usually older) homeschoolers catalog what they are learning through writing and pictures which are then inserted into binders. There are many notebooking page templates available on the internet.

Pandemic Pods – Sometimes referred to as microschoools, these small groups are made up of similarly-aged students who come together at an agreed upon location to learn, whether it’s to do remote schooling or homeschooling, and receive assistance with their work. These groups gained popularity during the current pandemic as a result of parents looking for a place for their children to be able to safely learn and socialize with other students. [Pandemic pods](#) are created by groups of families and typically led by an adult, whether it’s a tutor, teacher, or a parent.

Portfolio – A portfolio is an accumulation of materials that demonstrate your child’s learning . Some items included are: logs (reading, attendance), assignments (samples from each subject), awards, certificates of participation, list of materials used (textbooks, websites, computer programs, resource books, etc), pictures of projects and field trips, writing samples (composition and penmanship), and other items that you feel represent your child’s education. Portfolios can be online, in file boxes, in 3-ring binders (the most common), or otherwise. Organization is key. This is an ongoing process that your child should participate in.

Relaxed Homeschooling – Relaxed homeschooling is a term similar to Unschooling but takes more of a blended approach. Sometimes, relaxed homeschooling’s blend is more regulated since they could reside in a state with subject and logged time requirements.

Roadschooling – An interactive, hands-on form of “home” education in which families hit the road and let the travelling lead the education and exploration. Roadschooling can be short term, such as vacationing to a battleground, or long term, where a family is on the road as a way of life.

Scope and Sequence – An outline of skills and information to be taught, typically organized by grade level or by course, which provides information on what will be covered.

Socialization (The “S” Word) – Many homeschoolers are criticized for not providing appropriate socialization, meaning the interaction found in a traditional school. In fact, as homeschoolers point out, traditional school’s grouping by age, grade, and ability-level creates situations which do not work well for many students particularly compared to the socialization of children within a family and more natural social groupings. There are ample opportunities for socialization in homeschool groups and programs.

Special Needs – This usually refers to a child with any mental, physical, or learning challenges. The internet is full of support groups and information for parents who are homeschooling a “special needs” child.

Supplemental Resources – These are educational materials, field trips, and projects that are used to enhance the learning experience.

Textbooks – Textbooks are just one part of a package of resource materials that includes: a scope and sequence, an educator’s manual with teaching strategies, a student book with content explanations and examples, and a practice workbook.

Traditional Schooling – A term used by homeschoolers to refer to students who attend public or private schools.

Twice-Gifted – A term used for children who are considered gifted and have some kind of learning disability. The term “Twice Exceptional” is also used.

Umbrella School – A school that enrolls homeschooling children or families and offers services supportive of home education. This type of school is also known as a “Cover School.”

Unschooling – Also known as student-led education or interest-led learning, this is a teaching method in which students study those topics that interest them, rather than follow a pre-defined curriculum.

Unit Study – A cross-curricular educational approach in which learning is focused around a central, common theme. For instance, a unit study on trains would teach the development and use of early trains (history), train routes (geography), different engine types (science), train-based literature (language arts), train schedules (time and math), and so on. Unit studies allow children of different ages to study the same unit together but in different levels of detail.

Virtual Schools – These range from public schools administered as a correspondence school, to a range of highly specialized approaches offered by public, private, parochial, and charter entities. Homeschoolers do not consider virtual schools to be homeschooling as the parents are not responsible for their child’s education.

Waldorf/Steiner – An educational style with an emphasis on artistic expression, practical skill building, and empathy. The overall goal with the Waldorf/Steiner style is to create free and morally responsible children with a high level of social competence. This teaching style is fairly common in European countries, and follows Rudolf Steiner’s theory of child development.

TIME 4 LEARNING®

A Description

Time4Learning is an award-winning, online curriculum for PreK–12th provided since 2004. The multimedia-based program teaches math, language arts, science, and social studies. High school includes 14 electives in environmental science, statistics, economics, health and fitness, finance, academic methods, and art.

Time4Learning is primarily used as a homeschool curriculum. However, many families also use it for supplementary instruction, especially recently by students who are remote-schooling and who benefit from additional quality instruction and practice. Time4Learning is also often used for summer study to either reinforce the previous year's lessons or to get a head start on the upcoming school year.

The curriculum has been used by over *one million homeschooled students* throughout the U.S. and worldwide.

Time4Learning provides a flexible, student-paced approach to learning. The animated format and interactive activities provide instruction and help reinforce concepts through fun and engaging video lessons. Students have 24/7 access to a safe, secure, and completely ad-free environment. Because students can progress at their own pace, Time4Learning is popular with a wide spectrum of students including gifted, special needs, and ESL students.

Time4Learning allows parents to create a 'custom-fit' education for each child's unique needs. Many parents find their children at different levels in language arts and math, and Time4Learning makes it possible for parents to adjust grade levels by subject at any time.

A Parent Dashboard allows parents to make changes to their account and keep track of their child's progress, access lesson plans, preview lessons, and create schedules and custom reports that include grades, progress, attendance, and more.

Progress: Parents can create personalized plans that – given a start date, end date, and holidays or time off – will create a schedule that includes the number of activities students should be completing each week. Parents can see how their children are doing against the established schedule.

Proficiency: Time4Learning's automated grading and recordkeeping system shows parents the student's proficiency by providing quiz and test scores and the submitted writing assignments. Rubrics are provided so that parents know what to look for when grading writing assignments. The automated reports make it easy to create homeschool portfolios.

Content: Many parents, while looking at student progress, also preview or review the lesson's content. This enables parents to know what the child is studying and to talk with them about the materials.

Time4Learning provides a modern, rigorous, standards-based program that forms the curriculum foundation for many homeschooling families. It's easy to try with a simple signup process, a two-week money-back guarantee for new members, a low monthly fee, and a "cancel-at-any-time" policy.

USE COUPON CODE:
WHG14DAYFREE
FOR A 14-DAY FREE TRIAL

TIME 4 LEARNING®

Tidbits from Parents

Time4Learning is ready to go when we are! Set-up and use is easy. Kids just have to open the computer, log in, and learn! Thanks!

WILLIAM (WA)

I love hearing my kids LAUGH and have fun with Time4Learning! No more tears and frustration! So glad I made the switch!

JESS (IL)

DAN F. (CA)

I was shocked to learn how far behind my son was in math. His grades have always been stellar. Being allowed to pick and choose grade levels for each subject with Time4Learning has allowed us to address this issue. He is gaining confidence and understanding in math which will allow him to move ahead soon!

FAITH B. (TX)

As a working parent, Time4Learning has lifted a burden! I can feel confident my kids are getting a quality education and it has freed up time for MORE fun, educational activities we can do together as I'm not bogged down with lesson planning, grading, etc.

Notice:

This guide was written by Time4Learning and is offered as promotional material to assist families who are looking to homeschool their children or supplement their education. Please be advised that TimeLearning does NOT give legal advice and this guide should NOT be interpreted as legal advice. It is each parent's responsibility to interpret and understand the regulations of the state where they will be homeschooling.