



Homeschooling 101

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Former Public School Teacher – Grade 3, 4 and 6

Hello,

I am so excited that you are embarking on this fabulous journey of homeschooling.

Being a (former) homeschooling parent myself, I know the fears and worries that can be associated with making the decision to homeschool. Additionally, I know that there is an immense amount of information about homeschooling, which can be terrifying and overwhelming.

This guide will help you sort through the information needed to successfully start your homeschooling journey in Florida.

With that said, before you read any further, please be aware that you should always check the homeschooling laws in your specific county/state before homeschooling.

Please always remember that there is no one way to homeschool and every homeschooling family looks different. Do NOT compare yourself to others.

I am so happy to help you get started on this journey!

Best,

Eva

Eva Lynn Goldstein – Meola, M.Ed., B.S.Ed.

Part 1: Getting Started with Homeschooling

What is your WHY?

Take a moment to think about why you are choosing to homeschool.

Write your reasons below.

If you are still not sure if you are going to homeschool, write the reasons you are considering it.

My Why!!!



First "Official" Day
of Homeschooling
Kindergarten



Age 25, as she was finishing
graduate school at the
University of Colorado @ Boulder

Part 2: The Laws

Now let's talk about what you need to do legally to get started with homeschooling.

The first thing you want to do when you decide to homeschool is check the specific laws in your state.

Activity Time:

Find out the laws in your state and take notes on what the rules are for homeschooling below.

<https://hslida.org/legal>

By law, your letter of intent should be done by the time the child turns 6 by February 1st of any school year, but some parents decide to do it by the time their children are 5 years of age. If you are pulling your child from school, you must send in your letter of intent within 30 days of establishing your homeschool.

Additionally, be sure to withdraw your child from their public school if they were previously enrolled.

According to Florida, homeschooling parents have six basic responsibilities.

- Step 1 Submit your Notice of Intent.
- Step 2 Choose your educational approach.
- Step 3 Maintain your portfolio & making it available.
- Step 4 Submit an annual evaluation.
- Step 5 Preserve your records.
- Step 6 Submit your notice of termination.

Step 1: Submit Notice of Intent

The notice must be filed in your district school superintendent's office within 30-days of beginning your home-education program. It is wise to do this immediately after establishing your program, especially if you are withdrawing your child from a public or private school, to ensure avoiding truancy allegations.

Send your notice return-receipt requested to prove it reached its destination. There is no official form that must be submitted. FPEA does provide a sample on their website that you can download.



https://fpea.com/sites/fpea.com/files/page/file_attachment/Letter%20of%20Intent.pdf

In the county of Broward, you can find the form here:

<https://www.browardschools.com/cms/lib/FL01803656/Centricity/domain/13538/home%20ed/Notice%20of%20Intent.pdf>

You can either email or send this to the address on the form.

According to Florida Statute 1003.01(13), all children ages 6-16 are required to attend school regularly. If your child turns 6 sometime between the beginning of the school year and February 1, that child is required to attend the entire school year, and you are required to notify the superintendent.

In the rare case your superintendent returns your letter of intent if your Child is 5, a conversation with the superintendent about the mandatory kindergarten portion of the law would be appropriate.

When you begin to teach your 6-year-old, you may start with kindergarten, first grade, any other grade, or even the continuation of a preschool program. Kindergarten does not necessarily start at age 5; however, in the public-school system, if the child turns 5 on or before September 1 of that school year, he may be registered for kindergarten.

It is permissible to teach kindergarten when your child is 5 even though you are not required to register your child with the superintendent or provide an end-of-the-year evaluation.

With homeschooling, you teach your child WHERE THEY ARE ACCADMEICALLY. Not "worry" about what the school does/doesn't do. This is the BEAUTY of homeschooling.

Your Notice of Intent MUST have these four items:

- Name of each child (age 6-16).
- Birthdate of each child named.
- Address
- A parent's signature.

Step 2: Choose your educational approach and curriculum.

There are as many different styles or approaches to homeschooling, as there are flavors of ice cream.

Do NOT think you need to subscribe to any ONE type.

People toss these words around, so I want to share them with you!



Traditional Homeschooling

The default homeschooling style for many new homeschoolers is to align their approach with that of the classroom educational model they are so familiar with. This means you “touch upon” most subjects on a regular basis. You probably use some type of “boxed” curriculum or “online program” where it mirrors what a public or private school does.

Eclectic Homeschooling

Many homeschoolers become eclectic homeschoolers over time after they discover that blending multiple approaches works better for them than ascribing to a single defined style. You might use a “traditional” curriculum for (let’s say) math; however, then you do unit studies or lapbooking or student-led unschooling for other subjects.

Unit Study Homeschooling

Centering your homeschool studies around a specific topic or theme is called the Unit Study approach. This can involve integrating various academic subjects such as history, science, and English language arts into a dedicated study of a theme such as weather, bats, a favorite book, or even a biographical figure.

Unschooling

Unschooling is perfectly legal in Florida. Unschooling is the student-led approach. Your child makes most of the decisions in what they want to learn. The state makes no requirements in terms of materials or methods used.

Classical Homeschooling

Classical education is an approach to teaching and learning based on a three-part process to training the mind, called the trivium. Using the “trivium” model, children move through three main stages of learning: concrete learning (the grammar stage), critical learning (the logic stage), and abstract learning (the rhetoric stage). It’s a language-focused, literature-focused style of learning that has been adopted by many homeschooling families.

Waldorf Homeschooling

The Waldorf education philosophy originated in the early 1900s with Rudolf Steiner, who believed that child development could be grouped into three distinct stages of roughly seven years each. The Waldorf approach to early childhood education de-emphasizes academics. For formal learning, the Waldorf approach recommends teaching curriculum subjects/topics in “blocks” of 3-6 weeks of in-depth study each. This keeps children focused on one subject at a time, rather than switching gears multiple times a day.

Charlotte Mason Homeschooling

Charlotte Mason is steeped in the specific philosophies of educators based on the findings of a British educator from the 19th century Charlotte Mason put a heavy emphasis on using high-quality literature, which she called “living books,” to teach children. She believed that education should involve the whole person, not just the mind.

Montessori Homeschooling

Maria Montessori was a medical doctor and Italian educator in the late 19th and early 20th century. The Montessori approach to early childhood education is a child-centered approach that values each child as a unique individual. Creativity and curiosity are encouraged, which leads students to value knowledge and seek it out for themselves.

Roadschooling

Roadschooling is a growing trend in which families pack up their belongings and take their homeschooling on the road. Many families who embrace this lifestyle integrate what they are seeing and experiencing into their child’s homeschool curriculum.

Worldschooling

It has often been said that “the world is a classroom.” Some homeschoolers, however, take this adage quite literally! Worldschooling is an educational movement that recognizes that a student can receive no greater education than by experiencing and interacting with the world around them. For families able to make it work, this often involves traveling together and using the journeys to enhance their child(ren)’s education. There is a myriad of ways to do this.

If I was ever put on the spot, I would probably say I was an eclectic homeschooler with “Roadschooling” influences!

Which type of homeschooling approach do you think would fit your family/children best?

Please remember:

1. Not every curriculum/approach works for every member of the family / every student.
2. There are so many choices and sources. This can be overwhelming.
3. Florida does not require any specific curricula. This allows you to be free to select the materials/courses best suited for your child.
4. Florida doesn't require specific credits for high school. This allows you to be free to select the materials/courses best suited for your child.
5. If something doesn't work, it is absolutely okay not to continue it. You do not have to finish what you began. This isn't school.

How to Choose a Homeschool Curriculum

The definition of a curriculum is the subjects comprising a course of study in a school or college.

Based on Florida Law, ***(and if you live outside of Florida, please, don't forget to follow the laws of your specific state)*** there is no legal requirement regarding what curriculum you have to choose; therefore, we have the freedom to pick what we would like.

Some parents choose not to use a curriculum at all and un-school by letting their child learn naturally.

Some parents are more relaxed and use different resources to build their own curriculum.

Some parents do a mix of online classes, live coops/classes, and "curriculum". There is no right or wrong.

If you want to buy one outright, finding out your child's learning style is a great first step. As you consider various "all-in-one" curriculum, you should consider your own teaching style in addition to your child's learning style.

Various Homeschooling Styles /Curriculum

<p>Traditional</p> <p>Abeka Alphab Oega Bob Jones University Bookshark Calvert Masterbooks Rod & Staff</p>	<p>Charlotte Mason</p> <p>The Charlotte Mason approach uses literature with plenty of time spent outdoors exploring. The development of an appreciation for art, music, and nature.</p> <p>Ambleside Online Beautiful Feet Books Blossom & Root Five in a Row Heart of Dakota Magic Forest Sonlight The Good and the Beautiful Trail Guide to Learning Winter Promise</p>	<p>Unit Studies</p> <p>Five in a Row Magic Forest Academy Moving Beyond the Page My Father's World Tapestry of Grace Winter Promise</p>	<p>Classical</p> <p>The classical approach uses the "trivium" model. Children move through three main stages of learning: grammar stage, the logic stage, and the rhetoric stage. Quite often, Classical Education, is based on Christian World Views.</p> <p>Classical Academic Press Memoria Press Tapestry of Grace Veritas Press Classical Conversations</p>
<p>Online Learning</p> <p>Open Tent Academy Acellus Power School Bravewriter Calvert Outschool Liberty Online Academy Memoria press Next Level Homeschool Oak Meadow Storyline Online Supercharged Science Time4Learning Veritas Press</p>		<p>Low Cost</p> <p>NOTE: You get what you pay OR don't pay for!</p> <p>Easy Peasy Discovery K12 Khan Academy Storytime Online Readworks.org Little House Kindergarten Spark Learning PowerSchool</p>	<p>Please note:</p> <p>I do/do not recommend any of these specifically. This is just a partial list to help you get you started. You NEED to make decisions for YOUR child/family/lifestyle.</p>

Step 3: Maintain your portfolio & making it available.

Your portfolio must contain two parts, the first being documented records.

FPEA defines this as “a log of educational activities which is made *contemporaneously with the instruction**, and which designates by title any reading materials used.” *Contemporaneously with the instruction** means the documentation should occur at the same time as the instruction.

This keeps your documentation and materials in chronological order, which aids in the evaluation or inspection process. *Since Florida law does not require lessons to be planned or approved in advance, this allows for more spontaneity in your teaching and for capturing teachable moments. Sample materials must also be included.* The law refers to these as “samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks or creative materials used or developed by the student.”

According to Statute 1002.41, home educators are not required to keep attendance or meet “the requirements of a school day as defined in statute 1002.01.” A county or state official cannot require you to keep or show attendance records.

The portfolio must consist of the following:

1. A log of educational activities that is made contemporaneously with the instruction and that designates by title any reading materials used.

2. Samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student
(e) The parent shall determine the content of the portfolio, preserve it for 2 years, and make it available for inspection, if requested, by the district school superintendent, or the district school superintendent's agent, upon 15 days' written notice.

What does this mean in English? Keep a paper trail!

In Massachusetts and Virginia, I had these same requirement. What did I do?

I kept a 3-ring notebook with clear plastic page protectors.

- If I used any "traditional curriculum", I had it listed with publishers.
- I kept a "book list" that my daughter read independently.
- I kept a list of volunteering we did that was part of our homeschooling life.
- I kept a list of field trips we did with a photo from each one.
- I kept (when she was older) math chapter tests.
- I kept one writing sample a month.
- I kept one piece or art/photograph of art or project that she did.
- I kept any certificates from academic competitions, involvement in the Homeschooling community, extra curriculars etc.

Basically, I kept a huge scrapbook! Once a month, I sat down and did this. Honestly, it was EASY and FUN. For me, was like a walk down memory lane.

As Shayna got older (grade 3+), she assisted in keeping it!

NO ONE EVER REQUESTED IT FROM ME.

In Florida, you can use this for your evaluation.

Step 4: Submit an annual evaluation.

The law requires an annual educational evaluation, which the parent or guardian must file with the district school superintendent's office.

The parent is responsible to ensure the evaluation arrives there. It is suggested you send it certified mail, return receipt requested. ***The annual evaluation is due on the anniversary date of the submission of your letter of intent. This date is not to be confused with the date of the submission of your last annual evaluation.***

Nothing in the law requires families to comply with any other date, nor can the local school district enforce an arbitrary deadline.

The home-education law provides five evaluation options:

- An individual evaluation by a Florida-certified teacher of your choice.
- Any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher of your choice.
- A state student assessment test.
- A psychological evaluation.
- Any other method mutually agreed upon by the parent and the superintendent.

After you send in your child’s evaluation, the superintendent is directed by law to “review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation.”

When the Florida-certified teacher concludes that your child has progressed sufficiently according to his ability, then the superintendent legally “shall accept” this conclusion, and the report goes into your child’s file. However, if your child’s evaluation does not indicate sufficient progress, the superintendent will notify you in writing that your child will be on a one-year probation.

During the one-year probation period, you should provide remedial instruction. At the end of that year your child will again be evaluated and must show sufficient progress according to his ability. If sufficient progress is not shown, your child will no longer be eligible to be registered with the district. If you want to continue home education, you may be able to enroll your child in a private school that would provide assistance and oversight.

This is all that needs to be submitted for your annual evaluation. FPEA provides this form INTENTIONALLY to make it easy for you! It can be downloaded from their website.



Home Education Annual Evaluation

Student:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Street Address _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Parent/Guardian:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

On _____ I, _____

DATE _____ TEACHER NAME _____
a Florida Certified Teacher, evaluated the above named student in accordance with ss. 1002.41, and I find that s/he has demonstrated progress at a level commensurate with his/her ability and is ready to continue instruction at the next level.

Teacher/Evaluator:

Name: _____

Certificate Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Keep a copy for your records and mail to your school district.

https://fpea.com/sites/fpea.com/files/page/file_attachment/2023%20evaluation%20form.pdf

Part 3: How Long Do I Spend Homeschooling Daily

If I had a dollar every time, I was asked this question, I would be very wealthy! Honestly, it depends on the child!

In general, homeschooling takes much less time than public school and you won't need 8 hours every day to homeschool your children! Remember, you are homeschooling a few kids and not an entire class of 27 kids like in public school (which takes way more time).

You just need to be willing to be flexible enough create a customized homeschool schedule that works for your family! Remember: One of the **benefits of homeschooling** is that you can tailor learning to meet your needs and schedule, so you may homeschool for fewer or more hours than this based on your needs.

What to count as homeschool hours can be confusing, especially if you're new to homeschooling. However, you need to remember that learning takes place everywhere! Your kids don't necessarily need to be sitting at a desk and reading from a textbook to count as learning. With that said, homeschool hours can be counted anytime your children are learning!

Think of it this way:

- Cooking covers math, reading, life skills (and more!)
- Nature walks to look for different birds and bugs covers physical education and science.
- Watching historical documentaries covers history.
- Playing board games uses problem solving, creativity, and critical thinking.
- Doing chalk art on the driveway covers art, creativity, and color matching and fine motor skills for younger kids.

The list goes on and on! Don't get stuck into an old school mindset of thinking learning only takes place with a textbook and a workbook during certain hours. How long is a school day? However long it takes you to do all the learning you have planned!

With this said, depending on where your child wants to go to college and how competitive the college is, scholarships they might compete for, and their own passions for internships, academic summer programs etc. you want to make sure that your high school child completes what said college is looking for. It is better to begin this discussion earlier than later.

If you still want an idea of time, here are some approximates:

- Preschool – 30 minutes a day
- Elementary – 2 hours a day (please note that this might include any classes)
- Middle School: 2 – 4 hours a day (please note that this might include any classes)
- High School: 3 – 5 hours a day (please note that this might include any classes)

What did I do in my homeschool with Shayna?

Math was required daily – every day – all year long – that we woke up at home.

Reading was required daily. We might have read something together. We might have read something separate; however, there was a set time for reading – typically after lunch.

Then, we most often did unit studies/lapbooks. We rotated on topics. She would pick one. I would pick the next. We would do everything we could on that topic, and once we felt “done” then we would move on.

She took art classes, swim team, fencing, soccer team and did a coop outside of the home.

We never paid attention to “time”. On good days, when we were both focused, we would go until we felt done. On tough days, we did the minimum and then, played games (Professor Noggin, strategy games etc.) took field trips, went to the library, park etc., geocached, and did things outside the house.



Dual Enrollment in Florida

Eligible home education secondary students may participate in dual enrollment, career dual enrollment, early admission, and credit-by-examination. Pursuant to Section 1007.271, Florida Statutes, students eligible for dual enrollment are exempt from payment of registration, tuition, and lab fees.

What are my personal thoughts about dual enrollment?

Honestly, I feel that childhood is very rushed. I feel like there is tremendous pressure on children today. Personally, in my humble opinion, I do not see the benefit of doing dual enrollment. My daughter could have easily handled college courses in eighth grade. In tenth grade, she was accepted at Bard University in New York with a \$35,000 scholarship for all four years. Ultimately, it was her choice. She chose to turn it down.

With that said, I would not be doing my job if I didn't mention that yes, homeschoolers can be dual enrolled.

Part 4: Does Homeschooling Work?

The short answer is, “Yes, it can wildly succeed and be one of the best decisions your family will ever make.” If you’re coming from a traditional school environment where you entrusted others to educate your child, then this is a shift in thinking, scheduling, responsibility, and community.

It became a lifestyle you love and value, but it does take time, realistic expectations, and support. In fact, even now, 10 years after my daughter graduated, I can’t ever picture going back to traditional teaching. I am sticking with my community – the homeschooling community.

Fortunately, there are more resources than ever before to support homeschooling.



Shayna at age 27.

She went to University of Miami on a full academic scholarship in their Engineering department.
She went to University of Colorado at Boulder for graduate school on a full fellowship.
She paid ZERO tuition for her undergraduate and graduate school degrees.

Today, Shayna is an Aerospace Engineer.
She works for Impulse Space, which is a Start-Up.

She is working on a rocket, which will hopefully go to Mars, and it being made by a 3D printer.
It is her goal to be in mission control when Impulse sends its rocket up.
Additionally, she hopes to have the opportunity to go to Mars – one day.
These are her dreams – and yes, she is training/working towards them.
We will have to wait and see if they happen.

However, most importantly, Shayna is HAPPY. WELL ADJUSTED, and WELL EDUCATED.

Part 5: South Florida Homeschool Resource Center (SFLHRC)



South Florida Homeschool Resource Center is a central hub and social network for the homeschooling community, both students and parents.

SFLHRC will provide pick and choose options such as a la carte classes, academic events, social events, extra-curricular activities, field trips, and parent workshops to illuminate their homeschooling journey. All members of South Florida Homeschool Resource Center (SFLHRC) are treated with respect and dignity; all voices are honored, and all contributions are valued.

SFLHRC is a community of educators and families who work together to create an enriching learning environment.

- Encourages excellence in academics.
- Encourages the learning of a variety of life skills.
- Establishes meaningful connections to the community.
- Inspires a growth mindset for all stages of development.

From the onset, our founder wants others to have the same flexibility that she wanted as a homeschool parent: the ability to mix and match classes as kids' needs and interests changed and short class durations (quarters) so no one felt "locked into" a year-long commitment.

Families will be welcome to:

- For 2023 – 2024, on Mondays, you will be able to take one class, two classes, or a full morning of classes.
- Actively participate for one six-week sessions, and then, take the next off if you choose.
- Dig in and join us for a full year!
- Participate in Fabulous Friday Events: Field Trips, Academic Events, Park Days and more!

During 2023 – 2024, we will continue to rent out space and utilize parks.

Our ultimate goal is to open our first facility by June 2024 in Broward County.

We hope then, by June 2025 we will open two additional centers: Miami Dade and Palm Beach.

We have FRIDAY events lined up between now and May 2024.

Please ask me to be put on the email list or for a PDF of events.

Pre-registration and pre-payment is required to guarantee a seat. Every event has a deadline. MOST sell out!

As far as Marvelous Mondays, decisions will be announced soon; however, it looks like we will have FOUR pods:

1. Ages 3 – 6 – Montessori Based 2-hour Pod.
2. Ages 6 – 8 – Younger Elementary A la Carte classes.
3. Ages 8 – 11 – Upper Elementary A la Carte Classes.
4. Ages 11 – 14 – Middle School A la Carte Classes.

All Monday A la Carte Classes will be project-based, hands-on, encouraging higher order thinking! ALL types of learners are WELCOMED. SEATS will be LIMITED. These groups will remain small!

Fall 2023

October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and November 6

Make Up Day: November 13

Winter 2024

January 22, 29, February 5, 12, 26 and March 4

Make Up Day: March 11

Spring 2024

April 1, 8, 15, May 6, 13, 20

Make Up Day: June 3

To stay current, please join our Facebook Group:

1. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/413681610780341>
2. www.sflhrc.com
3. Email Eva at eva@sflhrc.com to be put on our email list.