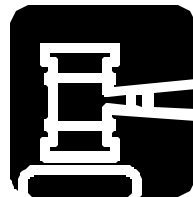


Getting Started in Home Education

Familiarize yourself with the North Dakota law.

Carefully read the "Summary of the Law" section of this packet. Read and comprehend the law thoroughly to give you confidence in your communication with school officials, family members, and other concerned people. With a good grasp of the law, you are less apt to be intimidated and fall prey to unnecessary requests and demands. Often requirements requested by local superintendents are the result of ignorance on their part regarding the *current* home schooling laws. The law seems to change every two years whenever the legislative body convenes so this is an opportunity to stay current on the changes and to gently and firmly instruct your local school officials. This packet contains a copy of the North Dakota Century Code (NDCC).



Decide how you will qualify to teach under the law.

1. A parent educator needs to qualify under only **ONE** of the following options:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. Be a ND state-certified teacher | c. Have a baccalaureate degree (a four-year college degree in anything) |
| b. Have a high school diploma or G.E.D. and meet or exceed the cut-off scores on a national teacher exam | d. Be monitored by a ND state-certified teacher for at least two years |

2. Remember, under the monitoring provision you can request that your local school district provide you with a monitor and they must do so free of charge. Or you can privately contract with any willing state certified teacher. The only qualification is that they be currently certified in ND.

3. If you decide to qualify using the monitoring option, be certain you understand exactly what is required of you, the certified teacher monitor and the school. This will keep you from giving in to unnecessary requirements and from opening yourself to harassment. A *monitors' information packet* is available from our office.

Join the Home School Legal Defense Association.

HSLDA can give you expert advice, prevent you from making mistakes, support you in your efforts to teach your children and handle problems you may encounter with school officials. It is well worth the annual fee. To guarantee legal coverage, be certain you follow their guidelines. The NDHSA strongly recommends that all home educators in ND become members of HSLDA. An HSLDA application is included in this packet. Home educators in ND can now apply for membership using the Group Discount Plan provided by the North Dakota Home School Association. You will benefit from annual savings using this program. Our group name is *North Dakota Home School Association* and our group discount number is **29 96 66**. An HSLDA application is provided in this packet and contains Group Discount information. **ASIDE:** Currently attorney fees range from about \$100-\$150 per hour, much higher for some. HSLDA services can be guaranteed for \$95 per year, a savings of \$20/year.

Be wise in your interactions with school authorities.

Keep a positive, respectful attitude. Have all communication in writing. If you find yourself being hassled, let HSLDA intercede. Knowing the law well can help you avoid most difficult situations. The NDHSA is available to answer questions and discuss concerns. It is recommended that you file your statements of intent by certified mail. It is the obligation of home educators to maintain respectful and responsible relationships with their school district of residence.

SEEK OUT SUPPORT

1. **Contact the North Dakota Home School Association**, if you have not done so already. The NDHSA provides assistance, advice and counsel. Though no attorney is on staff, the staff is knowledgeable on home education issues. NDHSA publishes a monthly newsletter free of charge to those who request it; hosts an annual spring convention featuring nationally-known speakers, numerous workshops, exhibit hall, used book sale, art exhibition, writing contest and a special evening session; oversees statutory changes during the biennial legislative session; encourages the development of local support groups; publishes a quarterly mailing (*The Prairie 'Rose' Companion*) for recognized support group leaders associated with the NDHSA; publishes a "Monitor's Information Packet" and a "P.S. Superintendent's Information Packet"; provides expertise in the area of education and; publishes the *ND Guide to Home School High School*, a manual available for a suggested donation of \$15.

2. **Contact your nearest support group** A copy of area support group leaders/contact families is included in this packet. Find other home schooling families to fellowship with in order to support one another in this important endeavor.

3. **Subscribe to publications written for home educators.** Some publications include: *Practical Homeschooling* (Mary Pride's Magazine for Living & Learning at Home), Home Life, PO Box 1190, Fenton, MO 63026-1850; *Home Schooling Today*, PO Box 436, Barker, TX 77413, www.homeschoolingtoday.com; *The Old Schoolhouse*, PO Box 185, Cool, CA 95614, www.thehomeschoolmagazine.com (may be included in this packet). These publications and many others can be very helpful and provide practical assistance for the home schooling family. They are written from a Christian perspective.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

1. **Do you know why you want to educate your child at home?** Developing your educational and life philosophy will help you keep focused. It will also help you articulate your thoughts when called upon to defend your decision to home educate. Take time to learn and understand the different philosophies of home schooling. Read home school magazines and other periodicals. Several of the many good books available are listed later in this packet. Even some curriculum catalogs have words on the subject. Talk to other home schoolers. In your process of learning, you

may discover the need to liberate yourself from concepts that come from your own public school experience. The blue sheet in this packet has a brief overview of the various methods and philosophies of education.

2. It helps to write out your own personal philosophy of education. Don't be overly fastidious about this. Your philosophy will develop as you continue your home education program. Be realistic, but make a start. You can refer to it for encouragement. You may want to share it with others as the opportunity arises. As your confidence and understanding of the educational process grow you will want to revise or redefine your philosophy. Thinking it through will motivate you to persevere and to sharpen your focus. Again, it will aid you in articulating your reasons for home educating your children.

3. Make a list of your goals in home schooling. Where are you headed? What do you want to accomplish? Be specific. Refer to your goals in the weeks ahead. They will keep you on track. You will find yourself developing new goals and abandoning some initial ones as you mature in your educational endeavors. A scope and sequence can assist you in developing academic goals. For the Christian home schooling family spiritual goals will also play a very important part.

CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES

1. Before you start looking for teaching materials, **decide what method of teaching you will use.** Do you prefer to start out with a correspondence course? Perhaps a CD-ROM approach or video course will work best for your children. Will you use a textbook approach, have your children use workbooks and other self-directed study, or perhaps unit studies are more your style. You may use a combination of all of these. Once again, take time to read about teaching methods. You can find such information in curriculum manuals and books such as: Theodore Wade's *The Home School Manual* (The Home School Manual, Gazelle Publications, 11580 Red Bud Trail, Berrien Springs, MI 49103 1.616.471.4717, approx. \$30); Cathy Duffy's *Christian Home Educators' Curriculum Manual* (available for elementary years and for junior/senior high through various suppliers for about \$30 each); *The Guidance Manual for the Christian Home School* by David and Laurie Callihan (order 1.800.CAREER-1 through Career Press, www.careerpress.com); and Debra Bell's *The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling* (available at her website [www.DebraBell.com] for \$19.95). Also, we strongly recommend Mary Pride's recent publication, *Mary Pride's Complete Guide to Getting Started in Homeschooling*. This manual is comprehensive and can be purchased for about \$30 (it is worth every penny!) from: Home Life, PO Box 1190, Fenton, MO 63026 or call 636.529.0137. Many more resources are listed in the resource list.

2. Next, **look over the curriculum** that is available. Browse through curriculum catalogs. Look over the material at curriculum fairs. See what those in your support group are using. You may want to send for samples. Look for a curriculum consistent with the values you want to pass on to your children. Choose materials that help them think. At the annual spring convention hosted by the NDHSA, many curriculum providers are available in the exhibit hall to assist home educators in the selection of curriculum styles. Check with your local Christian bookstores. Some are now carrying curriculum for home educators. Many local support groups schedule *curriculum* nights where families have an opportunity to listen to reviews of curriculum made by families who have used or are using the materials. These can be very beneficial.

3. **Not everything you order will work for you.** Throughout your home schooling experience, you can expect to regularly sample, test, discard and retain methods and materials, periodically reevaluating to be sure they are meeting your child's needs. Unused and used nonconsumable material costs can be recouped during the used book sale at the annual spring convention hosted by the North Dakota Home School Association. Some local support groups also hold periodic used book sales.

4. **How much can you expect to spend?** Cost depends on your budget, the age of your child, resources already on hand and your own creative time and energy. Pre-school through first grade can be accomplished for under \$50/year if you keep it simple, make your own charts and worksheets, and maximize use of the library. As the child gets older you will need to purchase more material. Some parents spend as much as they would sending their child to a private school. There are many ways to keep the costs down. Purchasing used books can decrease costs. Reproducible and nonconsumable material can be used by younger children in the years ahead. Again, when you are finished with your resources, you can recover some of the cost at used book sales held by your local support group or at the annual spring convention.

5. **Gradually build a good library.** Talk to people who read a great deal. They may be able to tell you which of the "classics" really are classics. Before you buy a set of encyclopedias, look over the ones in the public library. Choose a set your child will read. Encyclopedias cost too much to just sit on the shelf. Purchase a comprehensive dictionary and maybe a smaller one for easy reference and a thesaurus. Look for a world atlas, an almanac, a globe and basic art supplies.



In spite of the fact that the *National Geographic* is written from an evolutionary belief system, a subscription will provide hours and hours of good reading related to peoples and places. The maps they provide periodically are without equal. *The Institute for Creation Research* (ICR, P. O. Box 2667, El Cajon, CA 92021) also provides a monthly newsletter for a small annual fee. The *Christian History* magazine published by *Christianity Today* is an excellent resource for teaching specifically Christian history (*Christian History*, P. O. Box 11618, Des Moines, IA 50340 (800) 873-6986, \$19.95/yr.).

Some home educators (even non-homeschooling folks; I know of at least one!) have extensive personal libraries and may be willing to 'check-out' their resource materials. It goes without saying that timely return of borrowed materials in good condition is a must! There are now many vendors who deal in used books. Children's Books and BooksBloom are two that are generally present at the NDHSA state convention. Jan Bloom has written a valuable reference, *Who Should We Then Read?*, which will assist you to develop a fine home library. I have enhanced my personal library considerably by purchasing good used books from reputable vendors. Many used materials are available at the annual convention for very reasonable fees during the used-book sale. Internet sites can provide you with many options for savings on books. Two sites are www.amazon.com and www.buy.com but there are many other sites where you can purchase good used books. Keep at your library building. Consider yourself in it for the long haul. Good libraries take time, be patient.

ORGANIZATION, SCHEDULES AND RECORDS

1. **Plan for school space in your home.** Most find it helpful to have a specific place for lessons. Arrange the area to encourage concentration. You will want bookshelves, storage space and files for good organization of supplies and records. If you have cramped living quarters, use the kitchen table to work on. Empty a cupboard and use it to store books and supplies. Be creative!
2. **Decide how much material to be covered in the school year.** Divide it by the number of days you will have school (175 days required by law in ND). This will give you a rough idea of how to make your weekly lesson plans. You may have to make adjustments according to your child's learning pace.
3. You may want to **keep records** such as attendance, lesson plans, progress reports and health records. You can obtain forms from curriculum suppliers or ideas on how to make your own in curriculum manuals and other "how-to" books. There are several organizers sold in the form of loose leaf notebooks specifically created for home schoolers. *The Home School Manual* and *Christian Home Educators' Curriculum Manual* contain reproducible records including: curriculum calendars, subject or unit worksheets, weekly study logs, grade and attendance records, master schedules, daily responsibilities (useful for planning your entire home life), charts for tracking books read, transcripts, planning charts and standardized achievement test records. The North Dakota Century Code requires that the parent educator "shall maintain an annual record of courses taken by the child and the child's academic progress assessments, including any standardized achievement test results." Keeping good records is far more important in the high school years as you will use these records to prepare your high school transcript for college admission. During the elementary years record keeping can (and probably should) be less detailed. The only time you need to present your records for inspection is if you put your child into a government or nonpublic school and the records are requested.
4. **Establish a routine** that works for your family. Include time for you to make preparations for each new week.
5. **Learn to run your household in an efficient manner.** It is difficult to teach with a mountain of housework looming and clutter underfoot. Teach your children to do many of the chores as a part of your family living skills course. Read some books on the subject and implement a plan. Since we serve a God of order, orderliness ought to be an integral part of our lives. If your family has the means (or a beneficent grandparent) hire a maid. This can free mom up to concentrate on much more important educational and spiritual endeavors.
6. **Do NOT become too busy.** As you start this new chapter in your life, you may need to drop most of your extra activities for awhile. Life has seasons. Right now concentrate on the responsibilities God has given you--home and family. For wife and mother there is no greater responsibility with such eternal consequences than the wise raising and nurturing of children.

PRACTICAL TIPS

1. **Do not neglect the spiritual perspective.** For the devout, quiet time is not an option. You need God's strength for true success and for wisdom to teach. However, do not become so rigid in this pursuit that you lose the joy of communion with our Heavenly Father. After all, God is with His children at all times; one can commune even, and sometimes especially, during the hectic course of our day.
2. **Begin gradually** or you may quickly "burn out." Begin with the basics: reading, writing, arithmetic and Bible. When you and the children have a handle on that much, gradually add other subjects. A wide range of good books from your public or church library can painlessly enrich your child with knowledge in other subject areas while you increase your skill and confidence.
3. **Be careful with curriculum designed for classroom use.** Teaching at home is a tutor-student relationship. Therefore, you can expect to make alterations as you prepare your lesson plans. Eliminate wasteful busywork and repetition of skills already mastered. Move at the child's pace and do not become a slave to the clock, the lesson plan or the expectations of others.
4. **Fear of the standardized testing can cause undue pressure. Relax.** Standardized testing is required by law in ND for grades 4, 6, 8, and 10. Find out the general skills your child should know for his age level. *What Your Child Should Know When* is a skills evaluation guide for grades 1-8 available through various catalogs. Or call the *Sycamore Tree* (800-779-6750) for their Scoring High practice tests.
5. **When you are feeling overwhelmed, back off.** Give you and your children time to refresh yourselves and gain perspective. You will be a more effective teacher and the children will be more enthusiastic students.
6. **You cannot teach everything there is to know to your children.** All honest educators realize that in the world we live in there is so much knowledge that no one person, even in a life time, could ever know all there is to know. So calm down, with a good scope and sequence (see article in this packet on S & S) you can teach with confidence and your child will have a wholesome and well-rounded education. The primary goal ought to be to make your child a faithful student of God's Word, a lover of true wisdom and a life-long learner.

