

Benefits of Using the MDHSA Diploma Program

Mary L Hudzinski

Homeschooling provides the ultimate platform for flexibility in education so why would there be any benefit to using a diploma program? Essentially, there are three benefits to using the Mason Dixon Homeschoolers' diploma program to signal the completion of high school studies at home that readily come to mind. First, the diploma program provides established criteria developed by extensive research and experience. Second, the program provides experienced evaluators and administrative staff available to assist the homeschooling family navigate the high school choices and maintain appropriate records. Thirdly, the reputation of the MDHSA diploma program can assist the graduates to achieve their post-high school goals.

The primary reason for using the MDHSA diploma is criteria for determining what constitutes a credit worthy of placement on the transcript. This benefit has two elements. First, is the definition of a credit: what constitutes a course of study. The MDHSA diploma program provides flexibility within a structure that allows the family who participates to choose a path that works for each of the students in their family. How credits are defined has been researched so that each credit is meaningful. Additionally, because homeschooling is the ultimate in individualized education, the means by which credits are earned should be as flexible as possible. Mason Dixon Homeschoolers Association is a Christian organization whose purpose is to assist parents in the education of their children as well as provide a buffer between the family and the state where needed. For that reason, the diploma program credit definitions are as flexible as possible. Furthermore, expectations and reality can be balanced by the standards established by a third party with experience in various fields of study.

The second element is that there is no need to maintain a course description document. If a family chooses a parent issued diploma, it is important to determine what constitutes a credit, which may vary by subject, and maintain a brief course description document, including materials used. This allows the family to back up each credit on the transcript. Using the MDHSA diploma

program allows the family to skip this step and, if challenged, to provide documentation already developed to support the transcript.

In addition, some families have been able to use the transcript created for the diploma program to transfer into a public or private high school without loss of credits or educational time. Without the transcript, students have been required to repeat all work from 9th grade to the point of transfer. This benefit has not been extended unilaterally to students with a parent created transcript.

While the MDHSA diploma program maintains records such as a transcript and course descriptions, families issuing their own diplomas must develop the forms, establish the criteria, and maintain those records, as well as make the records available to third parties such as post-high school educational institutions and potential employers.

The MDHSA diploma programs offer the additional service of establishing criteria for distinction in various areas of study such as college preparatory courses (academic honors), fine arts, vocational studies, and recognition for distinguished service (Diploma with Distinction). These honorary designations signal colleges and potential employers that the student has successfully gone above and beyond the basic requirements of the law to accomplish specific goals. Honorary distinctions also provide students with additional motivation to aspire to a higher goal. The framework provided by the MDHSA guidelines ensures the goal is not easily met, nor impossible to attain.

The third reason that the MDHSA diploma program is preferable to state recognized parent issued diplomas is its reputation. Colleges have come to know and understand what to expect of graduates from the MDHSA diploma program. A student presenting with a parent issued diploma will need to be prepared to substantiate the course of study (course description catalog, and possibly more) as well as the quality of their work in ways that those using the MDHSA diploma program will not.

In short, MDHSA's diploma program eliminates the tedium of homeschooling high school students by establishing multiple flexible criteria for awarding credits, maintaining transcripts, eliminating the need to defend every credit on the transcript, aiding and supporting families educating their high school students, and

preparing the way ahead through the quality of the students who have been awarded the diplomas in the past. The experience provided by the diploma program administrative staff and the evaluators who work with the diploma program can be a real asset to a family navigating high school and post high school decisions. This frees parents to spend time and energy on enjoying the young adult years, equipping their children to finish high school as functional adults, and avoid re-inventing the wheel.

©2018 Mary L Hudzinski

Mary L Hudzinski
13624 Scott Road
Waynesboro PA 17268
717-762-3357
blufroghollow@pa.net

Bio

Mary Hudzinski and her husband assisted in the founding of Mason Dixon Homeschoolers Association in 1986. An active member of the organization in many capacities, Mary is mom to 9 children, 8 of whom have completed their high school education at home. She is now mom-in-law to 5, and Nana to 11. Furthermore, after being instrumental in the development of the MDHSA state recognized diploma program, she has been and continues to be the Director.