

# Legislative Update: Change to PA Home Education Law Public School/Homeschool Dual Enrollment

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The best language to describe the 2023 change to the home education law is actually\* found on the PDE website\*, quoted below.

*Effective with the 2023-24 school year, a school district must allow home educated student in the district to participate in any co-curricular activity that merges extra curricular activities with a required academic course, including but not limited to band or orchestra, CTE programs, and academic courses equaling up to at least 25% of the school day for full-time students in the district schools...Credits taken by dual enrollment may count toward mandatory course completion and graduation requirements in the home education program. The board of school directors may adopt further policies to implement the participation of home education students in cocurricular activities, academic courses, and CTE programs. A school district or CTC may establish policies that prioritize participation in courses or programs with limited seating and enrollment.*

Good news, right? Well, maybe. There are a few issues to consider when trying to determine if it would be wise for your student to participate in a public school class.

1. The student will be required to take any associated standardized tests unless opted out for religious reasons.
2. The student will be assigned a PAsecureID.
3. The student's birth date and age will be required, currently the home education law does not require the provision of this information to the school district.
4. It is unlikely that there will be consideration for family obligations or activities that conflict with the scheduled classes.

On the positive side, there are some considerations as well.

1. Students will have the opportunity to participate more easily in group activities such as band.
2. Subjects for which parents may not be qualified to teach or may have difficulty finding a teacher can be engaged more readily.
3. Students can be exposed to the public school environment in limited doses. If there is an interest in enrolling a student full time, this could be a way to determine the suitability of doing so.

In preparation for this article, Greencastle-Antrim, Waynesboro Area, and Chambersburg school districts were contacted for their policies. Greencastle-Antrim does not have a written policy but the advice given was for the parent to contact the superintendent's office in writing to request the participation. Waynesboro has a written policy that is currently being finalized and will be published on the school website when completed. Until then, it can be found in its unfinished form at the school website in the minutes of the June 13, 2023 meeting. Chambersburg forwarded a copy of the policy, with the advice that a request for participation in a class or activity should be made directly to the principal of the school at which the student would attend.

There are at least two very positive outcomes of this legislative change. One is that all PA home educated students will have access to the public school classrooms on a limited basis, space permitting. The other is that VO-TECH participation by any PA home educated student is possible, depending upon space in the program. In the past, some districts were very friendly, some were downright hostile. One of the secretaries with whom I spoke advised that, if there is an interest in attending VO-TECH, a request should be made known before the end of the 9th grade year as these programs are generally conducted over a three-year period.

\*PDE website (scroll to *Dual Enrollment of Homeschooled Students*)

<https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Home%20Education%20and%20Private%20Tutoring/HomeEdPrivateTutoringGuide/HomeEdPrograms/Pages/default.aspx#:~:text=Effective%20with%20the%202023%2D24,and%20academic%20courses%20equaling%20up>