

PARK COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
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Dear Home Educator:

Section 20-5-111 of the Montana Code lists the following as rights and responsibilities of a parent who provides home school and the rights of the child in the home school. A parent has the authority to instruct his child, stepchild or ward in a home school and is solely responsible for:

1. the educational philosophy of the home school;
2. the selection of instructional materials, curriculum and textbooks;
3. the time, place and method of instruction; and
4. the evaluation of the home school instruction.

Subject to the provisions of 20-5-102, to qualify your student(s) from compulsory enrollment, you must comply with the provisions of 20-5-109. The home school shall:

1. maintain records on pupil attendance and disease immunization and make the records available to the County Superintendent on request;
2. provide the minimum aggregate hours of pupil instruction in accordance with 20-1-301;
3. must be housed in a building that complies with applicable local health and safety regulations;
4. provide an organized course of study that includes instruction in the subjects required of public schools, as a basic instructional program pursuant in 20-7-111;
5. notify each fiscal year the local County Superintendent of Schools of your intention to home school your student(s).

By choosing to educate your child at home, you have assumed the complex role of teacher, registrar, record keeper and selector of textbooks and curriculum. If you need help, you may contact the home school network or the County Superintendent of Schools. We do have available curriculum guidelines and offer a registration card that gives you a discount at some bookstores and area businesses in Bozeman. This packet has been put together to help you. It is divided into six parts:

1. Home School Report

This notification form is to be submitted to the county superintendent's office annually, preferably as soon as you make the decision to home school. This qualifies you for the compulsory enrollment exemption. You may also send your notification in a letter format.

2. Federal Government Programs

This page is to be completed when you notify us of your intention to home school. Federal law requires that these programs be offered to everyone, so please sign the *Notification of Opportunity to Participate* form even if you do not want to take advantage of them. In order to benefit from any program except special education during the next school year, the form must be returned by October. Brief explanations of available programs are included.

- If you do NOT complete this form, the school district in which you live is required to send you a copy to you by registered mail.
- If you check NO, you will not receive any further notification of federal programs until you tell us differently.
- If you check that you do wish to be notified, a participation form will be sent you in the spring by the school district.

3. Attendance Record

According to Section 20-5-109 cited above and Section 20-1-301, all home schools must provide the minimum aggregate hours:

- 360 hours for half-time kindergarten
- 720 hours for grades 1-3 (in the public school setting, full-time kindergarten would fall under this guideline as well)
- 1080 hours for grades 4-12

Please submit your attendance records to this office at the end of each year or when you notify us the following year. We have included a form that may be used.

4. Home School Group

An information/fact sheet concerning the Park County Homeschool Network is enclosed. If this isn't enclosed, please call this office.

5. Websites and Resource Books

In past years, I was able to include in this mailing is the current edition of *The Montana Guide to Home Education*. There will be a new edition out later this summer and when I get copies, I'll let you know and if you'd like one; I'll mail a copy to you or you can pick one up at the office.

6. Montana Content Standards and Benchmarks

These are the standards for each content area taught in public schools. The benchmarks show where students should be at the end of 4th, 8th and 12th grades. Due to increased costs in postage and a tight budget; I am not able to include the benchmarks (where students should be after the 4th, 8th and 12th grades in this year's packet.; but I am including a copy of the content standards at a glance for you to look at. However if you are interested in the benchmarks and other curriculum information; it may be accessed by visiting www.opi.mt.gov then going to "Programs and Services of OPI" and scroll down to "Accreditation" and finally to "Content Standards". You can then click on the area that you are interested in.

7. CRT and ITBS Tests

Each year, I receive calls asking about achievement testing for home school children. A few years ago, the state of Montana discontinued the use of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) for Montana's public schools and because of this, schools in Park County no longer offer them and neither does this office. However The Gallatin County Home School Association does offer them to their children in March at the fair grounds in Bozeman and our students are invited to participate. The cost this past March was \$14 per student and they were given over three days. Because of *No Child Left Behind* legislation, all public schools in Montana do offer achievement tests called the Criterion Reference Tests (CRTs) which measure progress in the areas of math and reading in grades 3 through 8 and also 10th grade. In grades 4, 8 and 10, they also test in the science area. These tests are only offered through the public schools in March and if you are interested in your child participating, you'll have to contact the public school in your area. You can also go to the website <http://www.triangleeducationassessments.com/> where you can find achievement testing materials for home use and they can be given individually or in small groups.

I hope that you will consider me a resource person and that I can help to make your job a little easier. Please feel free to call, fax or e-mail me and I will help out in any way that I can. I applaud your efforts and determination to conscientiously teach your children at home.

Finally, although state law only requires you to register your children for home school up to the age of sixteen; I would strongly urge you to continue registering them until they have completed their schooling. This is especially important if your child is planning on post secondary education of any type. This office often receives requests from those institutions for proof of home school participation and your registration with this office offers that proof.

Ed Barich
Park County Superintendent of Schools