



# TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

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Jim Nelson  
Commissioner of Education

January 14, 2000

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED

SUBJECT: Home Schools

The issues surrounding students schooled at home continues to be of significant interest to parents and school districts. Because of the number of inquiries the Texas Education Agency continues to receive regarding this matter, I am providing some general information with respect to the Agency's position on home schooled students.

The decision rendered in *Leeper vs. Arlington* clearly establishes that students who are home schooled are exempt from the compulsory attendance requirement to the same extent as students enrolled in private schools. School districts which become aware of a student who is potentially being home schooled may request in writing a letter of notification from the parents of the student regarding their intention to home-school the student. This letter may require assurances that the home-school curriculum is designed to meet basic education goals including reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and study of good citizenship. Please note that a letter of this type is not required each year.

Additionally, it has been brought to my attention that there may be some confusion with respect to the awarding of transfer credit from students who have been home schooled. Students transferring from home schools should be afforded the same treatment as students transferring from unaccredited private schools. Awarding of credit for courses taken may be determined by reviewing the curriculum and/or work of the student, or by using appropriate assessments.

When appropriate assessments are used for determination of placement, the passing standard for those students who have been home schooled should be no higher than the standard required of students transferring from unaccredited private schools. As the Texas Education Agency has stated in the past school districts may assess students by administering valid and reliable assessment instruments. The determination of whether or not to use such an instrument is a local matter. Districts may place students according to a review of the curriculum, course of study, and work of the student coming from a home school environment.

If assessments are utilized for determining placement, the agency would suggest the following guidelines for assessing students:

1. Elementary students should be assessed by means of a nationally recognized norm-referenced test or by a previously released TAAS exam of appropriate grade level.
2. Secondary students may be assessed by using the credit-by-examination methods for individual subject areas.
3. A secondary student assessed using the credit-by-examination method should be given adequate time to prepare for the test, particularly if multiple examinations are required.

Finally, there has been some concern that school districts are contacting Child Protective Services regarding children who are being home-schooled. While school officials should contact an appropriate agency in instances of abuse or neglect of a child the determination of whether compulsory attendance has been violated should be made by the school district or local judicial authorities.

It is my hope that the aforementioned policy statements will help to alleviate any confusion with respect to the issues surrounding notification, placement and the awarding of credit to previously home-schooled students. Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Jim Nelson

Commissioner of Education