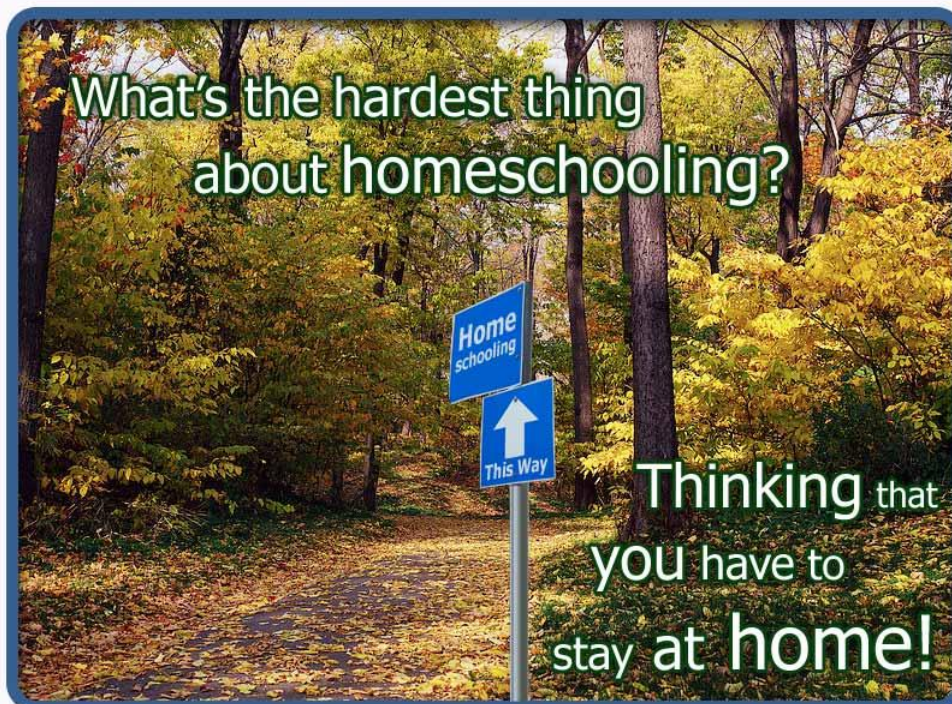


Welcome To

# Homeschooling

## A Guide for Families



This compilation made possible by the generous contributions of homeschool moms just like you. Many thanks to Kerry, Lisa, Mary, and Elise

This guide compiled and provided by: [Time4Learning.com](http://Time4Learning.com)

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## Introduction

Chances are, if you are just entering the world of homeschooling, you are feeling a little exhilarated, a bit unsure, and probably somewhat overwhelmed. You are not alone! Many parents who make the decision to oversee their children’s education have similar feelings at the beginning.

We at Time4Learning understand your concerns, and we hope that this introduction to homeschooling will help you feel more confident about getting started on this adventure. Also, we hope it will help you avoid some of the common errors made by new homeschoolers. In creating this Guide, we have asked many homeschoolers about errors that they feel that they made. Of course, we have also asked them about their thoughts on what they did right.

We have not heard them say that homeschooling was always easy nor that they felt that they should do it forever. But most homeschool parents express satisfaction with their decision to start homeschooling.

## Learn Your Reasons for Homeschooling

If you are reading this, you are considering a homeschooling journey for at least one of these reasons:

- **Religious** – Some parents who feel that the value system of their family is undermined by the schools.
- **Philosophical** – Some parents believe that today’s educational institutions inhibit true learning and growth.
- **Problem-Solving** – This group is the least evident in most homeschooling books or websites but it might actually represent the single largest group. These parents had their children in school but

they were disappointed by the experience. In trying to solve problems and do the best for their children, they have selected homeschooling as the best option.

This third group often starts homeschooling with the least preparation. In many cases, the decision to homeschool is triggered by some incidents that bring to a climax years of frustration with traditional schools. They turn to homeschooling only because they feel that the system that they had relied on has let them down; that they are homeschooling more as an accident than out of conviction. Time4Learning has coined the phrase “accidental homeschoolers” to describe these families. Some feel that since they are homeschooling only to help out their child, this sets them apart from other homeschoolers.

*“We were upset about the school and we were already looking for other options. John came home upset and crying again carrying a less-than-professional note from his teacher who again ignored the input on how best to handle our son. His confidence was deflated. We decided that he could not go back to that environment and to try this “homeschooling thing.”*

## Understand Your Child Academically

When starting to homeschool, many parents’ first instinct is to go shopping. Often parents start buying expensive curriculum prior to having a good understanding of what might actually work for their child. This turns out to be one of the most common errors that parents make. When a parent begins homeschooling, they must first understand where their children are academically. We would recommend spending two weeks working with and observing your child across all subjects while you consider your choices in terms of curriculum and programs. Time4Learning is a simple low-cost resource for this exploration period. You could also borrow textbooks from the library or purchase new or used books.

One warning; buying a textbook (new) can produce sticker shock. A \$60 price tag for a new textbook is not that unusual. And get ready for the painful news that the teacher guides, remediation workbooks, student workbook, and enrichment workbook also add to the high price tags. Like many teachers, parents get a rush of adrenaline at the Parent/Teacher store where resource books and textbooks call from every direction. Choose carefully; don’t overspend.

One mother summed it up perfectly:

*“We started off our homeschool journey this past June armed with a myriad of textbooks and lesson plans. I knew better. I had read thousands of stories of beginner homeschool families on the internet and no matter how different each was - what they had in common was the total over-purchase of teaching materials that first year. I couldn't help myself though -- I have loved books and crisp clean new notebooks and sharpened pencils since I was a very small girl...”*

## Learn the Laws

Be sure to know and follow your State's legal requirements. Two helpful resources for learning about requirements in each state are:

- [Homeschool Education Magazine's Laws and Regulations Pages](#)
- [About.com's Legal Information by State.](#)

Many States have a choice of rules under which you can homeschool. For instance, Florida’s compulsory education requirement can be met in a number of ways, including by joining a private “homeschool cover school” or through a “home education program”.

The States may differ in areas like:

- The type and support of homeschooling options
- Whether attendance is required
- Which subjects must be taught, if any
- What the qualifications of a homeschool educator must be, if any
- What type of notice you need to give your school district, if any
- What type of record keeping you need to maintain, if any
- What type of testing is required, if any

*Below are some examples which, while illustrative, are not intended as legal advice.*

**Florida** offers three legal approaches to homeschooling. The first approach allows the parent to establish and operate a home school with no specific attendance, subjects, or qualifications required. The primary requirements have to do with notification of the local superintendent, maintaining records, and a portfolio, and annual assessment by acceptable method or professionals. A second approach is to participate in a private homeschool corporation otherwise known as a cover school. These students are required to be in school for 180 days but do not have any of the other requirements of listed above. The third approach allows for the parents to hire a private tutor, where attendance of 180 days is required.


**Texas** provides only one option: the family must establish a homeschool as a private school. Texas' other mandate is that the subjects of reading, spelling, grammar, math, and good citizenship must be taught. There is no testing, record keeping, notice, or other qualifications required.

In **California**, the state funds charter schools. If you enroll in a "homeschool charter school" there is an advisor with money to assist homeschoolers in getting their materials and resources. The other alternative in California is for a family (or group of families) to set themselves up as a private school which is relatively simple.

**New York** has strict guidelines including state administered testing and a specific list of subject matter to be taught.

To find out about your state requirements, you should first read the laws. Then, you need to find out about the interpretations of the laws. Be aware that many sources of "information" can be out of date or otherwise inaccurate. Also, in some states, there are different rules or interpretations by district. It's important to speak with local homeschoolers who can explain how it actually works. You might be interested to read how some of our members read and interpret the homeschooling laws for your particular state. You can find these write-ups in the Time4Learning [state homeschooling information](#) pages.

**Time4Learning can help meet state requirements by:**

1. Providing a detailed lesson plan ("scope and sequence") for each grade and subject.   
<http://www.Time4Learning.com/scope-sequence/index.shtml>
2. Maintaining student records including: the time spent studying, the lessons covered, and the results of the ongoing assessments. For more information, login in as a student to see reports on your child's progress which could be found on the Member Login Page.

## Learn About Learning

“Learning” is a broad concept that includes: learning styles, memory access, and usage, meta-cognition (learning how to learn), as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Along with the aspects of learning, there are many teaching methods available to homeschool families. As you move forward, you will likely find a need to try different homeschooling methods at different steps of your journey. These include but are not limited to: Literature-based, Charlotte Mason, Waldorf/Steiner, Montessori, Classical, Unit Studies, and Unschooling. It is also common to eventually arrive at an ‘Eclectic’ approach, which mixes and matches some of each of these. Time4Learning believes that this eclectic, or mixed, approach is the most valuable in the long run since every student learns differently and therefore benefits from an education culled from a variety of styles.

While it would be foolish to expect parents to master each of these areas, we do think that studying them **MUST** be on the parent’s agenda. This is for many reasons:

- In learning about these ideas, you will improve your effectiveness as a homeschool educator.
- Children evolve from year to year so having an understanding of these ideas and methods will keep you one step ahead of your kids.
- As a parent and teacher, our primary teaching role is that of a role model or mentor. Education starts with curiosity and the desire to improve. When children see that you value learning, they will respond by returning the investment.

## Get Connected

Find some mentors and friends. Speak to some like-minded homeschooling families and ask them what they do and recommend. Try to find local families with whom you can share ideas and activities on an ongoing basis. Joining a compatible homeschool support group is often a key to success. If you don’t have personal contacts, try checking with your community library, watching the community activity listings in your area newspaper, or searching online for local groups (try Google - your city name - homeschool support groups). Another way to connect with other homeschooling families is to go to a park day. Many homeschool support groups have weekly park days that offer play and socialization for both you and your children.

Diane Flynn Keith of [www.homefires.com](http://www.homefires.com) says, “If you go to a Park Day at least three times and you still don’t make a connection, then try *another* Park Day held by a *different* support group. You may have to travel out of your immediate area to find just the right one for your family. Be willing to make the investment of time and gas money to do so - because **making connections with other homeschool families is critical to your long-term success in homeschooling.**”

There are lots of ways online to connect with local groups. Last; don’t be put off if some groups are a poor fit for you. Homeschool groups come in all shapes and sizes: large or small, formal or informal, religious or secular, special needs oriented or not, conformist or not, etc. Take time to pick the ones you are comfortable with, even if it means searching through several groups.

We would recommend trying to meet five to ten different homeschooling groups or families so that you are sure to find a few that you “click” with. Since the homeschooling world is diverse and full of strong-minded people, it is easy to run across a number of families who see the world very differently than you do. But eventually, persistent searching may connect you not only with compatible homeschooling families, but future friends, as well. You can also link up with other homeschoolers in your state by getting involved in the Time4Learning [State Support Group Forums](#).

## Go Online

Over the past ten years, the web has exploded with information about all-things -homeschooling. There are fantastic websites with oodles of homeschooling articles, recommendations, and forums.

Some good starting points include:

- [Homeschool.com](http://Homeschool.com)
- [The Homeschool Mom](http://TheHomeschoolMom.com)
- [Ann Zeise's a2z Home's Cool](http://AnnZeise.com)
- [Secular Homeschool](http://SecularHomeschool.com)
- [Jon's Homeschool Site, Midnight Beach.](http://Jon'sHomeschoolSite.com)

These sites provide a terrific introduction to teaching methods and materials that often include listings of support groups and cover schools. However, be warned that these mega-sites contain an overwhelming amount of information for a beginner. Don't be afraid to use these as simply a springboard for finding the specific resources and groups that will help you most.

Also, you might check out Yahoo Newsgroups [www.groups.yahoo.com](http://www.groups.yahoo.com). Search for common interests by geography (you can try your city, county, or state), age group ("homeschooling preschoolers"), interests (for instance: "homeschool zoology"), type of child ("autistic", "gifted", "troublesome", "adorable and troublesome"), subject matter ("homeschool phonics") or any combination of the above. If you have questions, consider asking them in newsgroups, in websites, in chat rooms, in blogs, on forums, and I'm sure there will soon be new online methods for homeschool parents to easily share information.

Time4Learning also has its own forum at <http://www.time4learning.net/forum> where you can come to discuss using online teaching materials to enhance homeschooling and how to best build a diverse or eclectic program for children. Of course, be wary of disclosing any personally identifying information about you and your family and consider whether the advice that you are being given has any commercial biases affecting it.

## Plan Your Year

Once you've identified the courses or materials you want to cover, come up with a logical way of working through them in a school year. For instance, one grade of Time4Learning's language arts and math curriculum is comprised of 160 lessons - - just the right number for a lesson per day of a school year - - with time for reviews, quizzes, getting stuck occasionally, and days off for field trips or other activities. At the end of a month, parents might review their child's progress to see if this pace is working out.

## Plan Your Day

Most children do best with diverse *activities*, but a predictable schedule. Younger children will particularly want to know which times will be set aside for one-on-one work. A sample morning schedule is shown here:

- 8:30 - 8:45 Opening of Day - Perhaps some rituals and a review of the day's schedule
- 8:45 - 9:15 Parent and child working together in a core subject such as reading or math
- 9:15 - 9:45 Child working independently - perhaps handwriting practice or memory work.
- 9:45 - 10:15 Break & Snack

- 10:15 - 10:45 Time4Learning Math
- 10:45 - 11:15 Time4Learning Playground
- 11:15 - 12:00 Educational Play with Manipulatives

Of course children in the intermediate grades may need a moderately more expanded schedule, and some children will need more work in certain subjects or areas.

## Use the Right Materials at the Right Time... And For the Right Child

We suggest avoiding any program which claims to be THE COMPLETE SOLUTION for your child. Each child's needs are different. NO program, either online, video, or text-based should be the sole homeschool curriculum, especially for younger children. In their case, it is important that there be daily work with writing and drawing to develop fine muscle skills, hands-on work with manipulatives and fine arts, oral reading practice, social activities, and other areas that software, video or workbooks cannot address.

For older children, we would stress that our program provides a good core set of materials but is not a comprehensive education. And while it's tempting to select a single approach for all children in the family, often what works best for one child doesn't work for another... or what works for one child for one subject might not work for that same child in another subject. Sometimes it's just a matter of being burnt out on a particular approach -- what was once exciting and interesting feels stale and boring after a few semesters. Many families rotate curriculum and approaches so that every semester, there is the thrill of a novel approach. For instance, one family uses Time4Learning every year only in the January to May period as a supplement.

## Learn the Lingo – A Homeschooling Glossary

As you are beginning this journey, you have probably already noticed that homeschoolers have a language of their own. Here are some terms and definitions that will help you make sense of this new lingo.

***Accidental Homeschooler*** – A term coined by Time4Learning to describe the homeschoolers who start on the homeschool path somewhat accidentally, more through a process of elimination of choices of educational options than a deep-seated desire to homeschool. Often, they convert from their initial skepticism to true enthusiasm.

***“Boxed Curriculum”*** – There are many programs for purchase that provide homeschool families with a comprehensive scope and sequence, textbooks, assessments, projects, and timelines that are grade leveled. These programs are prescribed and could be quite costly. However, they are helpful to a new homeschool family who would like guidance. However, what may work for one child may not work for another so a prescribed curriculum may not be the best route.

***Charlotte Mason Education*** – Miss Mason was a 19th century educator who believed that education should be based on great literature and the arts. She believed in a leisurely, self-directed style of education based on observation and reflection, often through discussion and journaling. Charlotte Mason education is based on a lifelong quest for knowledge and the skills.

***Classical curriculum*** – Classical households generally require extremely structured schedules and lesson plans.

***Classical Education*** – A process of teaching children to learn based on developmental phases and educational principles developed by the ancients. For the primary years, children learn fact-based

information. In the middle school years, children learn logic and reasoning, and in the high school period, children develop the art of abstraction and persuasion, also referred to as “trivium-based.”

**Compulsory Attendance/Education** – Refers to the ages during which the state requires students to receive formal education.

**Cooperative (Co-Op)** – A collective group of homeschoolers working together for a common purpose. All members of the co-op must contribute in some way toward the end goal; usually this contribution is in the form of effort, not money.

**Cover School** – A school that enrolls homeschooling children or families and offers services supportive of home education. This type of school is also known as an “Umbrella School.”

**Curriculum** – The materials used for a course, which can include a text-book, a teacher and grading guide, lesson plans, tests, and worksheets. In an online curriculum, some of these elements can be integrated and automated.

**Curriculum Map** – A Curriculum Map (or a concept map) clarifies how different subjects and levels of education relate in terms of sequence and dependency. For instance, it would highlight that to teach ‘two digit additions with carrying over’ in one grade, the child must have previously mastered place values, addition, and single digit math facts.

**Cyber Schools** – A new term referring to the new online schools. These range from public schools, administered as a correspondence school, to a range of highly specialized approaches offered by public, private, parochial, and charter entities. Some homeschoolers do not consider cyber schools to be homeschooling as the parents are not necessarily responsible for their child’s education. Schools generally need an additional accreditation to be specifically allowed to provide online credits and degrees.

**Deschooling** - Deschooling refers to the period of time, also called decompression, when a student (and family) adjusts after leaving a traditional school setting. This period can range from a few weeks to an entire year, depending upon the student’s needs.

**Eclectic Approach** – A method of teaching that does not rely on any one approach but rather culls the best from multiple approaches.

**Exclusive** - A term used to describe support groups that require a religious declaration of faith or other criteria for membership.

**Gifted - (see also Twice-Gifted)** - Homeschooling offers a unique opportunity for parents of exceptionally bright and talented children to tailor their education to their particular gifts and needs

**Homeschooling** – Education in which the parent takes primary responsibility as opposed to an institution like a private, public, or parochial school. There are increasingly a number of blends in which schools remotely supervise children with involvement by the parents. Homeschooling has a different legal status in each of the 50 states.

**Homeschool School** - A school to help support parents and to teach students in a homeschool context. See also Cover School.

**Homeschool Support Group** – (Also known as a Homeschool Group) A group of homeschoolers who interact on a regular basis for the purpose of networking, sharing resources, and energy, providing opportunities for socialization and co-teaching. Some support groups are virtual (i.e., internet-based), but the majority have physical locations and meetings.

**Inclusive** - An “inclusive” homeschool group accepts and includes **all** homeschoolers, irrespective of their beliefs or reasons for seeking an alternative to “traditional” education. Some religious home school groups require a “declaration of religious belief” in order to join.

**Lapbooking (see also Notebooking)** - An educational method that involves (usually younger) homeschoolers making "mini-books" about what they are learning. It provides space for drawings, writings, timelines, pictures, graphs, or stories on any topic of current study, and is designed to fit on a child's lap.

**Learning Methods** - Learning methods focus on the way a person best takes in and processes information. There are many theories that look at the way a person learns best including:

**Learning Styles** – This includes Auditory (learning through listening and talking), Visual (learning through seeing), and Kinesthetic/Tactile (learning through movement and touch). When learning takes place through the senses, students gain a more solid understanding of the content.

**Multiple Intelligences** – According to Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, there are eight different intelligences that shape the way a person interacts with information. These include: Linguistic or word smarts, Logical/mathematical or math smart, Bodily/kinesthetic or movement smarts, Visual/Spatial or picture smarts, Musical or music smarts, Interpersonal or people smarts, Intrapersonal or self smarts, and Naturalist or nature smarts.

**Natural Learning Systems** – The five natural learning systems which were developed by Barbara Givens include the emotional, social, cognitive, physical, and reflective learning systems.

**Notebooking (see also Lapbooking)** - A homeschooling activity where (usually older) homeschoolers catalog what they are learning in writing and pictures and inserting them into binders. There are many notebooking page templates available on the Internet.

**Portfolio** – A portfolio is an accumulation of materials that demonstrate your child’s learning. Some items included are: logs (reading, attendance), assignments (samples from each subject demonstrated throughout the year), awards, certificates of participation, list of materials used (textbooks, websites, computer programs, resource books etc), pictures of projects, and fieldtrips, writing samples (composition and penmanship), and other items that you feel represent your child’s education. Portfolios can be online, in file boxes, in 3-ring binders (the most common), or otherwise. But, it’s organization that is key. This is an on-going process that your child should take part (and pride) in from the beginning.

**Relaxed homeschooling** – Relaxed homeschooling is a similar term to Unschooling but who take more of a blended approach. Sometimes, their blend is required since they could reside in a state with subject and logged time requirements.

**School at Home** – A common beginning method of homeschooling in which a family attempts to simply recreate a conventional classroom education within their home. Many times this includes a boxed curriculum and a rigid daily schedule.

**Scope and Sequence** – An outline of skills and information to be taught, typically organized by grade level or by course. Provides information on what will be covered.

**Socialization (The “S” Word)** – Many homeschoolers are criticized as not providing appropriate socialization, meaning the interaction found in a traditional school. In fact, as homeschoolers point out, traditional school’s artificial grouping by age, grade, and ability-level, is a dysfunctional and unrealistic situation compared to the socialization of children within a family and more natural social groupings.

**Special Needs** - The internet is full of support groups and information for parents who are homeschooling a "special needs" child. This usually refers to a child with any mental, physical, or learning challenges.

**Supplemental Resources** – These are educational materials, field trips, and projects that are used to enhance the learning experience.

**Textbooks** – Textbooks are just one part of a package of resource materials that includes: a scope and sequence, an educators' manual with teaching strategies, a student book with content explanations and examples, and a practice workbook. These packages usually offer a re-teach (remediation) workbook or an enrichment workbook that focuses on higher level critical thinking skills.

**Traditional Schooling** – A term used by homeschoolers to refer to students who attend public or private schools.

**Twice-Gifted** - A term used for children who are considered gifted and have some kind of learning disability.

**Umbrella School** – A school that enrolls homeschooling children or families and offers services supportive of home education. This type of school is also known as an “Umbrella School.”

**Unschooling** – Also known as student-led education or interest-led learning, this is a teaching method in which students study those topics that interest them, rather than follow a pre-defined curriculum.

**Unit Study** – A cross-curricular educational approach in which learning is focused around a central, common theme. For instance, a unit study on trains would teach the development and use of early trains (history), train routes (geography), different engine types (science), train-based literature (language arts), and so on. Unit studies allow children of different ages to study the same unit together but in different levels of detail.

## Have Fun!

Homeschooling is unlike any other adventure you will embark on with your child. You are sure to have successes, failures, frustrations, and victories. One mother summed up her experiences this way:

*“I was so happy when I finally decided to pull my kids from school and to homeschool them. We had four fantastic years together and the education that we **all** received was spectacular. In the fifth year, we got restless and then, they went back to school. For us, it was a glorious time but not a lifetime commitment. I look at both my decision to homeschool and then to put them back in school as the two best decisions that I ever made. I only wish that I had made each decision one year earlier.”*

Time4Learning wishes you the best and hopes that you will find that by integrating Time4Learning's computer-based curriculum into your day, you and your child are assured of learning that's engaging, motivating and success-oriented. We hope that you will find us to be a “supportive shoulder” as you begin this exciting new venture you have embarked on.

## Information on Time4Learning – Online Homeschool Curriculum

Time4Learning is an online educational system that provides web-based multimedia lessons, interactive activities, printable worksheets, online assessments, answer keys, teacher guides, and progress reports for home education. Time4Learning covers from Preschool through Middle School with language arts, math, social studies, and science. Time4Learning's popular modular approach (e.g. use one subject or all four) makes it ideal as a primary or supplemental curriculum. In some cases, Time4Learning is used as the core curriculum, while in others, parents are using another curriculum and supplementing with Time4Learning.

Children like learning on the computer and Time4Learning provides a solid online curriculum for homeschool or supplementary use. Look at the sample lessons or sign up with a two-week money-back guarantee. It's risk-free since you can cancel at any time and the monthly payments are low. Registration is online and only takes minutes.

**Contact us: By phone: (888)771-0914, by using our contact form: [www.Time4Learning.com](http://www.Time4Learning.com) or by emailing us: [info@Time4Learning.com](mailto:info@Time4Learning.com).**

## Time4Writing.com – One-on-One Writing Help for Kids

Time4Writing provides eight-week online writing courses that help elementary, middle, and high school students build writing skills through one-on-one interaction with a certified teacher. Students study a new topic each week through automated online exercises, lessons, readings, and written assignments. A personal writing teacher reviews and provides feedback on each assignment, the day after it is submitted. For more details on courses available starting daily, please visit [www.Time4Writing.com](http://www.Time4Writing.com).

### Places to find other great articles and resources on homeschooling:

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/time4learning](http://www.facebook.com/time4learning)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/time4learning](http://www.twitter.com/time4learning)

Daily Blog: <http://www.home-school-online.com/>

Parent Homeschool Forum: <http://www.time4learning.net/>

Time4Learning.com: [State-by-State Homeschool Support Groups](#)

