

PENNSYLVANIA HOME SCHOOLERS

masthead handlettered by Hannah Richman, age 6

A STATEWIDE NETWORK FOR SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT HOME EDUCATION

Editors: SUSAN & HOWARD RICHMAN

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U-Turn on Driver Ed!

from Howard Richman

At a meeting on November 8, 1993, at the Pennsylvania Department of Education between the Chief Counsel Jeffrey Champagne, Bob Roush and Phil Mulvihill (heads of offices at the Department relating to driver education and home education) the Chief Counsel informed the others of a reversal of Mr. Roush's earlier interpretation that school districts must allow homeschoolers to participate in school driver education programs if the school districts offer the full program including the on-the-road component in their districts.

Based upon Bob Roush's earlier interpretation, many school districts were told that they must allow homeschoolers in the driver education programs. We notified homeschoolers of this opportunity in articles which appeared in this newsletter and our *Guide to PA Homeschoolers Diploma*. Bob Roush and Phil Mulvihill had even written a Basic Education Circular which they had planned to send out to school districts. But just prior to sending it out, they sent it to the chief counsel's office for a final OK. At that point, the chief counsel came out with the new position.

The law governing driver education states that if school districts use the whole program they must make it available to other schools in the district including private and non-public schools. However the chief counsel is now holding that they do not have to make it available to home education programs. School districts *can* still make such courses available, and the Department of Education encourages such cooperation, but the districts can choose whether or not they will do so.

Private Driver Education Options

Driver education is not required by the home education law, but many parents may choose to have their students take such a course, partly to get a substantial reduction in car insurance premiums for a number of years. Each course requires a 30 hour textbook component and a 6 hour on-the-road component.

One option for the textbook component is taking the

course by correspondence from Penn State. Call 800-252-3592 for catalog and information on all of their high school level courses. Cost is about \$110 which includes textbooks. You could arrange the on-the-road component with drivers who teach driver education in the schools. Our insurance agent's secretary gave us the name of several driver education teachers in the area who had signed certificate cards for student drivers. One who lives down the road from us agreed to teach our son Jesse the on-the-road component for \$90.

Another option is for students to sign up for a course offered by AAA which involves both the driving and the classroom requirement and costs about \$250.

Lobbying Districts for Driver Ed and Sports

The possibility also exists that you can lobby your school district to let homeschoolers participate in driver education in the public schools just as some homeschoolers lobby their school districts to permit homeschoolers participation in school sports as described in articles elsewhere in this newsletter. Keep in mind that there is often a trade-off between participation in public school programs and freedom. For example, those who want their children to participate in school sports will have to come up with a way satisfactory to the school district to demonstrate that their athletes are keeping up their grade point averages as required by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Assn.●

Homeschoolers Sports Teams

One alternative to participating in public school sports is starting homeschool support group sports teams. Linda Rieksts, scheduler for the Berks County Homeschool Hurricanes, reports that there are now three teams in the homeschoolers' coed basketball league for students junior high age and up. Call her (215-987-3616) to schedule games for your support group's team. Also, next fall the New York State Homeschoolers have agreed to let Pennsylvania soccer teams participate in their late October soccer tournament at Camp Iriquoia, South of Binghamton. Each soccer team should have 15 students ages 11 and up.●