

Diploma Options Currently used by Homeschoolers in PA

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In February 2003 I surveyed PA homeschool diploma programs and nationwide correspondence schools in an attempt to determine how many homeschoolers use each of the many diploma options available currently. The percentages below are based upon the PDE statistics of 1836 16-year-olds in home education programs in school year 2000-2001, as these students could be presumed to be seniors during the 2001-2002 school year.

Option 1: Diploma from a Recognized Organization -- 46%

Pennsylvania is the only state where homeschoolers can earn a recognized diploma from a homeschool organization. The PA Department of Education currently recognizes the diplomas of seven homeschool organizations as being the equivalent of a high school diploma. (See page 28 for the addresses of these organizations.) Each of these organizations has its own standards and procedures for awarding course credits. These organizations had the following numbers of homeschool graduates from PA in 2002:

- Pennsylvania Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency (PHAA) had 531 graduates.
- Erie Area Homeschoolers had 87 graduates.
- Susquehanna Valley Homeschool Diploma Programs had 82 graduates.
- Buxmont Christian Educational Institute had 50 graduates.
- Bridgeway Academy had 50 graduates.
- Mason-Dixon Homeschoolers Diploma Program had about 30 graduates.
- Aleithia Learning Center had 7 graduates.

These numbers total 837 or 46% compared to 39% just two years ago. The popularity of these organizations is increasing.

Option 2: Diploma from a Correspondence School -- 27%

I sent a survey to 18 of the more popular correspondence schools asking them how many graduates, 18- years-of-age and younger they had from Pennsylvania during the 2001-2002 school year. The following six correspondence schools responded:

- Keystone National High School 800-255-4937 <http://www.keystonehighschool.com/> 179 PA graduates in 2002
- BYU Independent Study (Mormon) 800-914-8931 <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/index.dhtml> 89 PA graduates in 2002
- Christian Liberty Academy School System (Evangelical) 800-348-0899 <http://www.homeschools.org/> 49 PA graduates in 2002
- Seton Home Study School (Catholic) 540-636-9990 <http://www.setonhome.org/8> PA graduates in 2002
- Clonlara School 734-769-4511 <http://www.clonlara.org/> 6 PA graduates in 2002

- Kolbe Academy Home School 707-255-6499 <http://www.kolbe.org/> 0 PA graduates in 2002

These numbers, which total 331, include several of the more popular correspondence schools. Of these six schools, only Keystone is licensed, and thus recognized, by the PA Department of Education's Division of Private Licensed Schools. My guesstimate is that a total of about 500 homeschoolers from Pennsylvania graduated with correspondence school diplomas in 2002.

Option 3: Drop-out or GED-- 18%

Many homeschoolers drop-out or take the GED, though the percentage is difficult to estimate. I will estimate the number at 18% based upon the following two statistics:

1. According to PA Department of Education, 34% of those who homeschooled at age 16 were no longer homeschooling at age 17. Many of these students probably dropped out as soon as they reached 17, the upper limit of compulsory education in Pennsylvania. I estimate that half of these students dropped-out and were joined by an additional 1% who dropped-out at 18.
2. According to a survey of school superintendents in 2000, conducted by Dr. Stephen Melnick of Penn State, superintendents claimed that 23% of homeschoolers were doing "D" or "F" level work, the sort of grades that one would expect for drop-outs. However, the school superintendents over-counted students by 130% putting a more accurate estimate at 18%.

Option 4: Other Options -- 9%

There are several other options for homeschoolers in PA. I assume that the remaining homeschoolers graduated with one or another of these options:

- Parent-issued diploma not backed by the HSLDA.
- Parent-issued diploma backed by the HSLDA because the family was a member at the time of graduation.
- Certificate of completion signed by the local superintendent of schools. Such a certificate, like the diploma from a recognized organization, is recognized by the PA Department of Education as the equivalent of a high school diploma.
- Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma obtained from the PA Department of Education after completing 30 college credits (about 10 courses) from an accredited university.

As a result of self-certification (see the front page article), I expect that the percentage of homeschoolers using the parent-issued diploma options will increase over the next few years even though those options, unlike almost all of the others listed here, do not result in a recognized diploma.