

TENNESSEE

Compulsory Attendance Ages:	“between six (6) years of age and seventeen (17) years of age, both inclusive.” Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-6-3001(c)(1). A parent or guardian who believes that a child is not ready to attend school at age six may apply to the principal of the public school which the child would attend for a one semester or one year deferral in required attendance. § 49-6-3001(c)(5). Section 49-6-3001(c)(2) also exempts from the compulsory attendance law any child who has received a diploma or certificate of graduation from high school, is enrolled in an approved GED program or has received a GED certificate, or is enrolled in a home school and has reached the age of 17 years. The truancy laws of Tennessee are applicable to children and parents who enroll their child in a public school for more than six weeks, even though the child is less than six (6) years of age. § 49-6-3007(g).
Required Days of Instruction:	180 days. §§ 49-6-3004, 49-6-3050(b)(3), 49-50-801(d).
Required Subjects:	None.

Home school parents have five options:

Option I: Home School Statute—Notify the Public School. § 49-6-3050. “A home school is a school conducted or directed by a parent or parents or legal guardian or guardians for their own children.” Three of the five options fall under the home school statute.

1. Parents must submit a notice of intent to the local superintendent prior to each school year “for the purpose of reporting only.” The notice of intent must include the names, number, ages and grade levels of children involved, location of the school, curriculum to be offered (no particular subjects required), the proposed hours of instruction, and the qualifications of the parent-teacher. § 49-6-3050(b)(1).
2. Parents must maintain attendance records, which are subject to inspection by the local superintendent. The records must be submitted to the superintendent at the end of each school year. § 49-6-3050(b)(2).
3. Instruction must be given 4 hours a day for the same number of days required for public schools. § 49-6-3050(b)(3).
4. Parents must submit proof of vaccination as required by § 49-6-5001 or “a signed, written statement that such immunization and other preventive measures conflict with the parent’s or guardian’s religious tenets and practices.” §§ 49-6-3050(b)(9), -5001(b)(2).

Option II: Home School Statute—Associate With a Church-Related School. § 49-6-3050(a)(2)(A). “Home schools that teach kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), where the parents are associated with and students are enrolled with a church-related school, as defined by § 49-50-801 ... are exempt” from the home school requirements above.

Option III: Home School Statute—Parent as Teacher in Church-Related School. § 49-6-3050(a)(3). “A parent-teacher may enroll the parent’s home school student or students in a church-related school as defined in § 49-50-801, and participate as a teacher in that church-related school. Such parent-teacher shall be subject to the requirements established by the church-related school for home school teachers and exempt from the rest of the provisions of this section.”

Option IV: Alternative Statute—Operate as a Satellite Campus of a Church-Related School. § 49-50-801. Parents may have their children attend a church-related school where the home is a satellite or extension of the church-related school. Unlike Options II and III, students in a satellite campus program are not considered home schoolers. Furthermore, parents need not comply with the notice, teacher qualifications, and standardized test requirements for home schools. The Tennessee Department of Education recognized this option in a memorandum from the Commissioner of Education to superintendents and directors of schools dated February 18, 1999.

Option V: Alternative Statute—Enroll in the Distance Learning Program of an Accredited Private School. § 49-6-3001(c)(3)(A)(iii). Parents may enroll their children in an online, Category III non-public school accredited by one of the six regional accrediting associations (e.g., the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) “according to the procedures and criteria established by the association.” 0520-7-2-.04 Rules of State Board of Education.

Teacher Qualifications: Option I: The parent-teacher must have a high school diploma or a GED.

Option II: If parents conducting a home school are associated with a church-related school, there are no qualifications for teaching grades K-8, but parents must have a high school diploma or GED to teach grades 9-12. § 49-6-3050(a)(2)(B).

Option III: Qualifications determined by the school in which the child is enrolled.

Option IV: No qualifications required by statute.

Option V: Qualifications determined by the school in which the child is enrolled.

Standardized Tests: Option I: Grades 5, 7 and 9 must take a standardized test administered by the commissioner of education or someone designated by him or by a professional testing service approved by the local education agency. Tests administered by the Commissioner must be without charge. The parent may be present when the home school student is in grade 5. § 49-6-3050(b)(5)(A-B). If a home school child “falls six (6) to nine (9) months behind his appropriate grade level in his reading, language arts, mathematics or science test scores,” the parent must “consult with a teacher licensed by the state. The parent and teacher shall design a remedial course.” § 49-6-3050(b)(6)(B).

Option II: Church-related schools must “administer or offer standardized achievement tests,” but no particular grade levels for testing are specified in the law. § 49-6-3050(a)(2)(A).

Option III: No testing required by statute.

Option IV: No testing required by statute.

Option V: No testing required by statute.

Religious Freedom Law: Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-1-407 (2009 House Bill 1598, effective July 1, 2009).