

# Homeschooling to Public High School

Recently a few parents have asked whether public schools can refuse to accept credits from non-accredited schools, including private homeschools. Unfortunately, the answer is yes. In fact, they don't have to accept credits from ACCREDITED private schools. This has practical implications for homeschooling families, as we discuss at the end of this article.

Public schools generally accept credits from other public schools, although we can't find anything in the Education Code or the associated regulations that requires that; we believe they probably do so under a more nebulous "full faith and credit" concept that requires one state to respect proper governmental actions taken in other states, such as California respecting your marriage license from Connecticut. For instance, if you move to California from Alabama after your child has completed sixth grade there, the local public school usually accepts that placement, even if it feels the old school was not as good as the current school. In special situations, such as a prior school permitting acceleration for a gifted child, they might quibble, and, in the higher grades especially, there will be issues about whether prerequisites for various courses have been met by classes taken at other public schools, but for the most part the public schools give credit to their counterparts throughout the state and in other states. We believe this would mean that if a child is transferring into a regular "brick and mortar" public school from a public independent study program, either a district ISP or charter school, they should respect the placement used by, and give credit for work satisfactorily completed at, the independent study program. We can't, however, find any regulations that would require that.

Individual school districts are given wide latitude in assessing the appropriate placement of incoming students who are transferring other than from other public schools. While we believe that most public schools would respect placement decisions made by private schools they think are the same as or similar to public schools (think of the more rigorous "college prep" type private schools, or the large Catholic parochial school system), they are more likely to challenge work done at smaller schools about which they know nothing, including private family schools. The following is right from the California Department of Education website's FAQs:

**QUESTION:** I have been home schooling and would like to enroll my child in a private or public school. The schools in my area refuse to place my child in what I believe is the appropriate grade level and are not accepting the credits my child has earned through home schooling. May the schools refuse to accept credits earned through home schooling?

*CDE ANSWER: There is no law requiring that "credits" granted by a parent who has been teaching his or her own child be accepted by public or private schools. Both private schools and public schools establish their own policies regarding the evaluation and placement of*

*new enrollees. Both have discretion to make this determination on the basis of assessments such as "end-of-course" tests or other methods they deem suitable.*

QUESTION: I am transferring my child from a private school to a public school. The public school will not give my child credit for all his or her courses. Is the public school permitted to refuse credits issued by the private schools?

*CDE ANSWER: California law does not require public schools to accept credits from private schools. Public school districts have the responsibility to evaluate the appropriate placement for a student. The district may make this determination on the basis of assessments, such as "end-of-course" tests or other methods they deem suitable.*

HSC's legal staff can find nothing in the Education Code that contradicts the CDE's position.

If you have advocated for a different placement for your child and your child has NOT been tested, ask if there is some way to use objective criteria for placing your child, such as a formal assessment or evaluation by a district teacher, informal taking of a STAR test, or whatever they might accept. Even if the school won't accept your private homeschool credits, perhaps your child's performance on an assessment test or impression upon an evaluating teacher will allow placement in an appropriate level. Of course, if your child has used courses from a third party provider that provides certificates of completion or even grades, you can give these to the school as proof that your child has mastered the subject and need not take it again.

This situation has very practical implications for families who currently educate their children outside the public system. We have heard of very few problems for families that are moving their children into public elementary or early middle school grades at their regular age level. Where the problems start occurring is at the high school level. High schools believe that, when they grant a diploma, they are certifying that the student has completed certain work indicated on the transcript; since admission to the UC and CSU system hinges so much on having certain accredited courses completed, we can understand the source of this concern. We think they are reluctant to give credit to work done outside the public or larger private system because they aren't willing to certify that the work was done if they know nothing about the courses.

If you think that your child might want to go to public high school, or if you foresee yourself wanting them or needing them to get a public high school diploma, you would be well advised to have your child enter the public system before high school starts, and preferably no later than the beginning of eighth grade, so that they can complete courses that would satisfy prerequisites for high school classes. We have heard, anecdotally, that a number of public high schools are "sick of homeschoolers coming to us when their kids are starting senior year and asking us to admit them as seniors and issue them diplomas as a blessing, validation, or last ditch attempt to correct the work they did outside the system."