TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION ASSOCIATION
Keeping Texas Families Free

Dear THSC Partner Group Leaders:

By way of introduction, let me explain that Texas Home School Coalition Association is a statewide advocacy organization for home educators with over 75,000 families on our mailing list. As the homeschool advocacy organization for the state of Texas, we work with state and federal agencies on issues related to home education. In fact, the state department of education, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), frequently refers calls they receive regarding home education to our organization for verification or resolution.

This letter is intended to address whether or not homeschool co-ops or academies should sign diplomas for homeschool students who have enrolled in these co-ops or academies as a part of their homeschool education. This is a common question that THSC receives, especially from co-ops and academies who offer graduation ceremonies to homeschool seniors who have taken classes within the homeschool group.

Homeschoolers are legally classified as a type of private school under Texas Education Code 5.001(6-a)[1] and the Texas Supreme Court Leeper decision[2]. The parent, as the administrator of the homeschool private school, is responsible for determining when his or her student has met the academic requirements for graduation.

According to the Leeper decision, the only legal requirements to homeschool in Texas are:

- The instruction must be bona fide (i.e., not a sham).
- The curriculum must be in visual form (e.g., books, workbooks, video monitor).
- The curriculum must include the five basic subjects of reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics and good citizenship.

As long as the student has complied with the requirements of the Leeper decisions, **the parent has complete discretion regarding any additional requirements for graduation.** The parents should construct a transcript and a diploma for the student and should sign his or her name on both documents to signify the parent's certification that the student has completed the

[1] https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.5.htm#5.001
[2] https://thsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Leeper_Supreme_Court.pdf

requirements for graduation. Transcript and diploma templates are available for free to THSC members[3].

Many homeschool students attend homeschool co-ops or university model schools or participate in online programs. These programs are highly beneficial for many families and often allow families to construct highly personalized, "hybrid" forms of education where the student does a portion of his or her school at home and a portion through the co-op or other programs.

Some of these independent programs also offer official diplomas and transcripts for graduation that are certified by the program. Families who use these programs often have two different options for how to graduate their students. Either option is entirely legal:

1. **If the diploma and transcript are signed by the parent,** then the student will be considered to have graduated from a homeschool program because it is the parent who is certifying that the student has met the academic and legal requirements for graduation. If a family chooses this option, it means that the parent is certifying that his or her student has fulfilled the requirement of the Leeper decision outlined above.
2. **If the diploma or transcript is signed or certified by another entity or individual** or if the name or logo of another entity appears on the diploma or transcript, the student will likely be considered to have graduated from that program, not from the parent's homeschool program. Texas Education Code Section 25.086(a)(1)[4] exempts from the public school compulsory attendance statute any student who attends a private school that includes a course in good citizenship. A student whose graduation is certified by an independent private program that meets this requirement is in compliance with Texas law.

A student can legally graduate through either of the above methods.

Under the circumstances described, which of these two options a parent chooses is less important than that the parent is consistent. **If the parent plans to state on official forms and**

[3] https://thsc.org/home-school-resources/high-school-and-beyond/#Graduate
[4] https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.25.htm#25.086

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legal documents that the student graduated from a homeschool program, the parent should sign both the diploma and transcript personally.

If the parent plans to fill in on official forms and legal documents that the student graduated through a particular independent program other than the parent's homeschool, then the parent should use the diploma and transcript provided by that program.

Mixing these two options up **is not illegal** but it can cause unnecessary confusion for employers or other institutions. A graduate who describes herself as having been homeschooled but who provides a transcript or diploma signed by someone other than the parent may face scepticism or confusion from the institution in question, even if the student is fully in compliance with Texas law.

This can result in students being unfairly scrutinized or being rejected for opportunities they are entirely eligible for because the institution is concerned about the validity of the student's graduation.

In order to avoid this confusion, THSC recommends that **only the parent** sign both the transcript and diploma, and that no third party names or logos appear on the transcript or diploma if the parent plans to describe their student as a homeschool student and plans to fill out official forms and legal documents that their student was homeschooled.

I hope that this helps to clear up any confusion regarding who should sign a homeschool student's diploma when that student is taking classes or graduates through a homeschool co-op or academy. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Tim Lambert

Tim Lambert, President

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