



Recordkeeping for Washington State Homeschoolers

By Maggie Dail, M.A.

I have often asked graduates of *Able to Teach*, a state-approved parent-qualifying course for those wanting to teach their own children in Washington, “Based on your understanding of the homeschool law, what records do you plan on keeping?”

Generally, I get parts or all of the following:

1. Copy of Declaration of Intent
2. Copy of the Able to Teach certificate
3. Planner / portfolio that reflect the time spent on the 11 subjects (K-8) or graduation requirements (9-12).
4. Annual Assessments

Since the only document that the law requires you to submit is the Declaration of Intent, one might ask, “Why keep records at all?” Here are my answers:

1. **First**, and most importantly for yourself:
 - a. To help you plan and assess how you are doing.
 - b. To help you on one of those “bad days”- when you or someone else is “beating you up”- (you know the kind of day that every parent has whether you are homeschooling or not).
2. **Second**, it is always better to have records if any one of the following occasions mentioned below occurs. Do not let this scare you, because if you are ready, you will have the records to show the appropriate authorities (not just anyone who comes to your door).
 - a. CPS – Even if a well-meaning neighbor makes a call with erroneous information, CPS is required to investigate. If you have records it will more than likely be a brief investigation.
 - b. Custody battles – Sadly, in my experience, this is the most frequent request for records.
 - c. Homeschool child is in trouble with the law.
3. Transferring to a school. It is always the receiving school that decides the requirements for enrollment and what they will accept.
 - a. Elementary /Middle School – usually children are placed according to age, but they may want records.
 - b. High School – Credits and graduation requirements now matter. (State Approved Private Extension programs like Academy Northwest, which is also accredited, help with transcripts, diplomas and so much more.)

- c. College Entrance – varies with college – survey your desired colleges as soon as possible. See pages 53,54 in *Homeschooling the High Schooler* Available through www.familyacademy.org

I also encourage parents to consider having a conversation with their children about their “grade level and school.” While Washington State’s truancy laws (Becca Laws) do not target homeschoolers, occasionally they might be mistaken as truants. Older children may be out of their home during school hours if they are part of homeschool activities or even work. More than likely, anyone questioning them will be satisfied with “I homeschool” at the least or “here is a copy of my declaration of intent” at the most.

Parents may want to talk with their children to be sure they understand that homeschooling is legal and a good choice for their family. Also, if the child is working at a different grade level for different subjects, they may not know their grade. For the most part it does not really matter, but if someone asks a child, “Where do you go to school?” or “What grade are you in?” they will be more confident if they know how to answer.

There is **no one right way** to keep records! You can keep what is most helpful to you and that reflects that you follow the homeschool law. Happy Homeschooling!

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