

*The Pennsylvania Home Education Law (Act 169, 1988) states: "An annual written evaluation of the student's educational progress as determined by a licensed clinical or school psychologist or a teacher certified by the Commonwealth or by a nonpublic school teacher or administrator. The evaluation shall also be based on an interview of the child and a review of the portfolio required in clause (1) and shall certify whether or not an appropriate education is occurring. At the request of the supervisor, persons with other qualifications may conduct the evaluation with the prior consent of the district of residence superintendent. In no event shall the evaluator be the supervisor or their spouse."*

It is important to keep in mind that the evaluator is hired by the home school family and should support the family's goals, regardless of whether it is a certificated public school teacher or someone from the "home school community". I use the example of finding a physician--you ask around and find someone who will work with you on your own educational goals. Just like your doctor should support your health goals--he needs to be someone with whom you feel comfortable talking and sharing--you need to be able to hire an evaluator who matches your educational and family philosophy. Some public teachers will do this, while others know only what they were trained to do and can't think outside the classroom model. I like to find an evaluator who is open to any style of home education which would include all sort of learning options.

Our job as home school supervisors is to ask a lot of questions in order to find an evaluator who meets our needs, who accepts our type of education, who is knowledgeable about the wide range of home education styles, and who is supportive of us. If you have an appointment with your evaluator and you are nervous, then you have the wrong evaluator! You should not be scared. Know that the evaluator is only seeing your child once based on what you show him or her. Your evaluator should be your cheerleader!

The number one thing I look for in an evaluator is understanding--specifically the understanding that I, the supervisor of the home education program, make the final decisions for my family. I also like to talk with an evaluator who has home educated his or her own children as he or she has walked in these shoes. That is not to say that only home schoolers can do evaluations; it depends on what you are looking for in the evaluation. Really, all you need is a report that you satisfied the provisions of the home education law and that the children are making progress.

If you are turning to your evaluator for advice or curriculum or learning issues, make sure that person knows all about your family. I find my comfort in talking with other home school moms who have encountered similar challenges, rather than only go with the single opinion of my evaluator. I try not to give my authority away to my evaluator, just as I do not give my authority over my children to the government.

I think we should all be very confident in who we choose for our evaluators. We pay them, and they offer a service that is required of us.

A good evaluator also understands the law and what is required. Let's keep it simple and depend on each other for support, advice, and guidance. The home education supervisor is in control of the home schooling, not the evaluator.

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