



The Latest News on Home Schooling in PA

Thomas J. Dubbs
PDE School Services Office
PA Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency (PHAA)
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Pennsylvania
Department of Education

➤ Objectives

- To learn more why people home school and the latest trends on an international, national, State and LEA level.
- To better understand the home school process including class/program attendance, as well as graduation and educational verification.



➤ Trends

- Internationally, the US, Great Britain, Australia, and Canada are the nations with the largest % of home school students. USA leads the way!
- Nationwide, nearly 6% of families reported homeschooling their children during SY 2023-24, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey.
- According to the Johns Hopkins University Home School Research Hub:
 - The number of homeschooled students is increasing even as the total number of U.S. students is decreasing and it is not pandemic driven.
 - While the home school population is less diverse than the current school-aged and public school populations, it increasingly reflects the diversity of the broader population.

➤ National Study Results

A study of 2022-23 data by the Pew Research Center cited these reasons for why parents decided to home school:

- School Environment (safety, peers) 83%
- Pursue moral instruction 75%
- Dissatisfaction with instruction 72%
- Desire to emphasize family life together 71%
- Prefer religious instruction 53%
- Interest in nontraditional approach 51%
- Special needs student – mental/health 36%



➤ Reaction to Stats

- Are your reasons similar or different compared to the national survey results?
- As a home school family and/or home school organization, are you expecting an increase, decrease or stable enrollment of home schoolers in 2026-27? Why?



➤ Home Education/Private Tutoring Reporting

- **School districts** must provide PDE with data on the number of home schooled and privately tutored students and information on cyber programs during the annual Home Education and Private Tutoring data collection window (June 9-Oct. 23).
- PDE has had 100% compliance with submitting this data the past seven years.



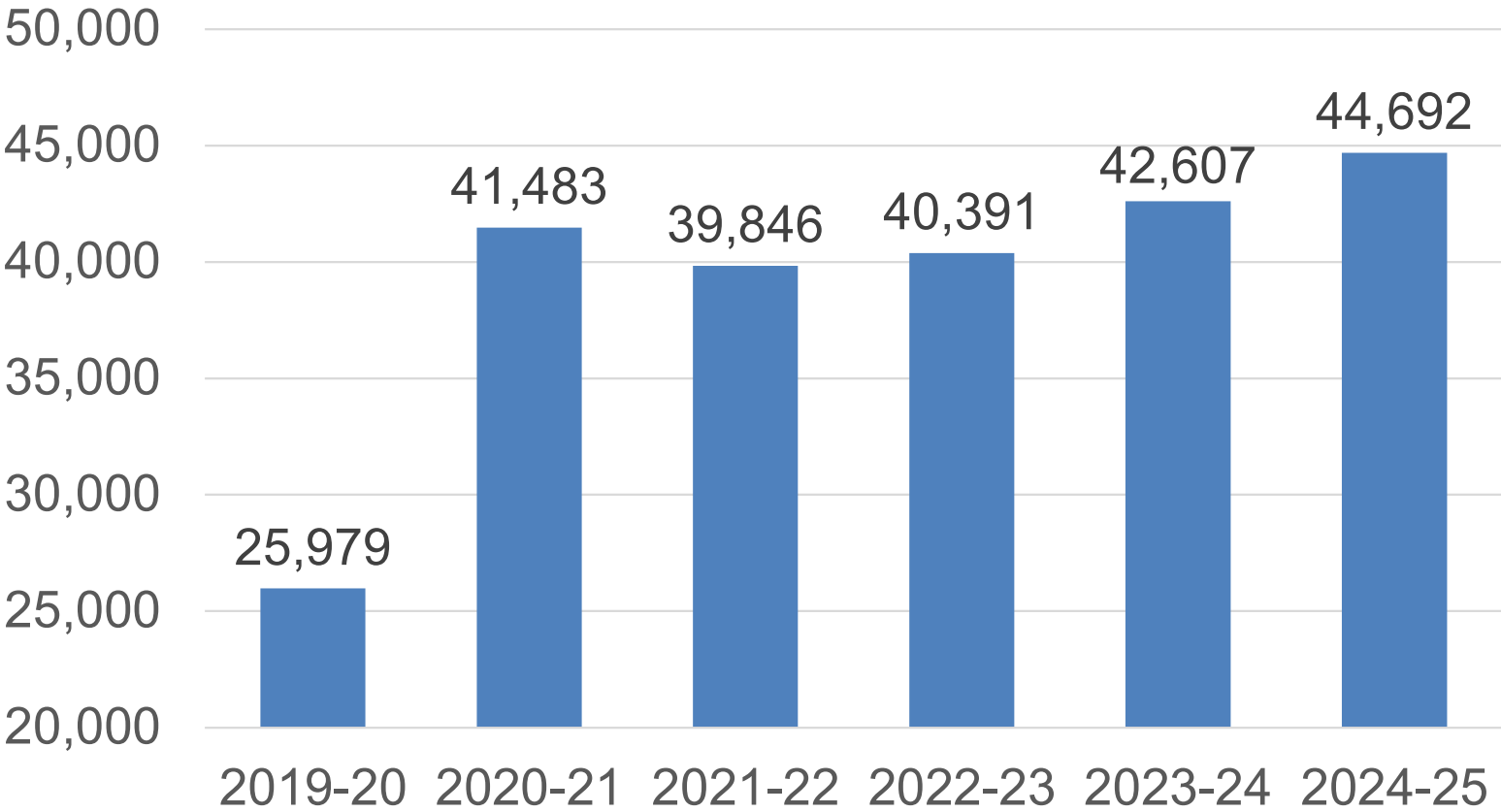
➤ School-Sponsored Online Programs

- In 2024-25 school year, 92% of school districts offered an online program in at least one grade.
 - 86% of the districts with online programs had curriculum for K-12 grades
 - 3% had programs for grades 1-12
- Students in a school-sponsored online program are not considered home school students.
- Despite the availability of these programs, the home school population continues to grow.



➤ Home School Enrollment – Ages 5-21

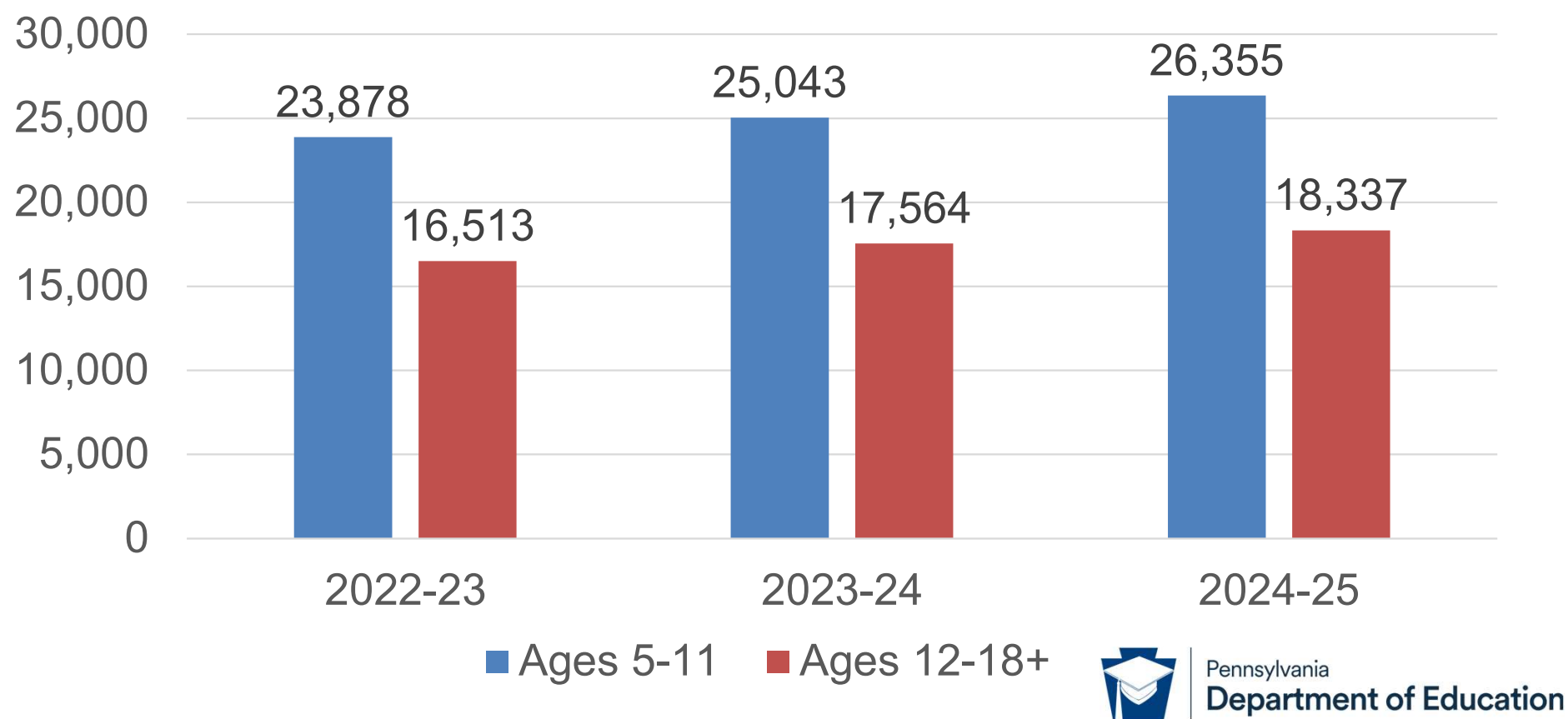
Home school enrollment in Pennsylvania increased 72% since 2019-20.



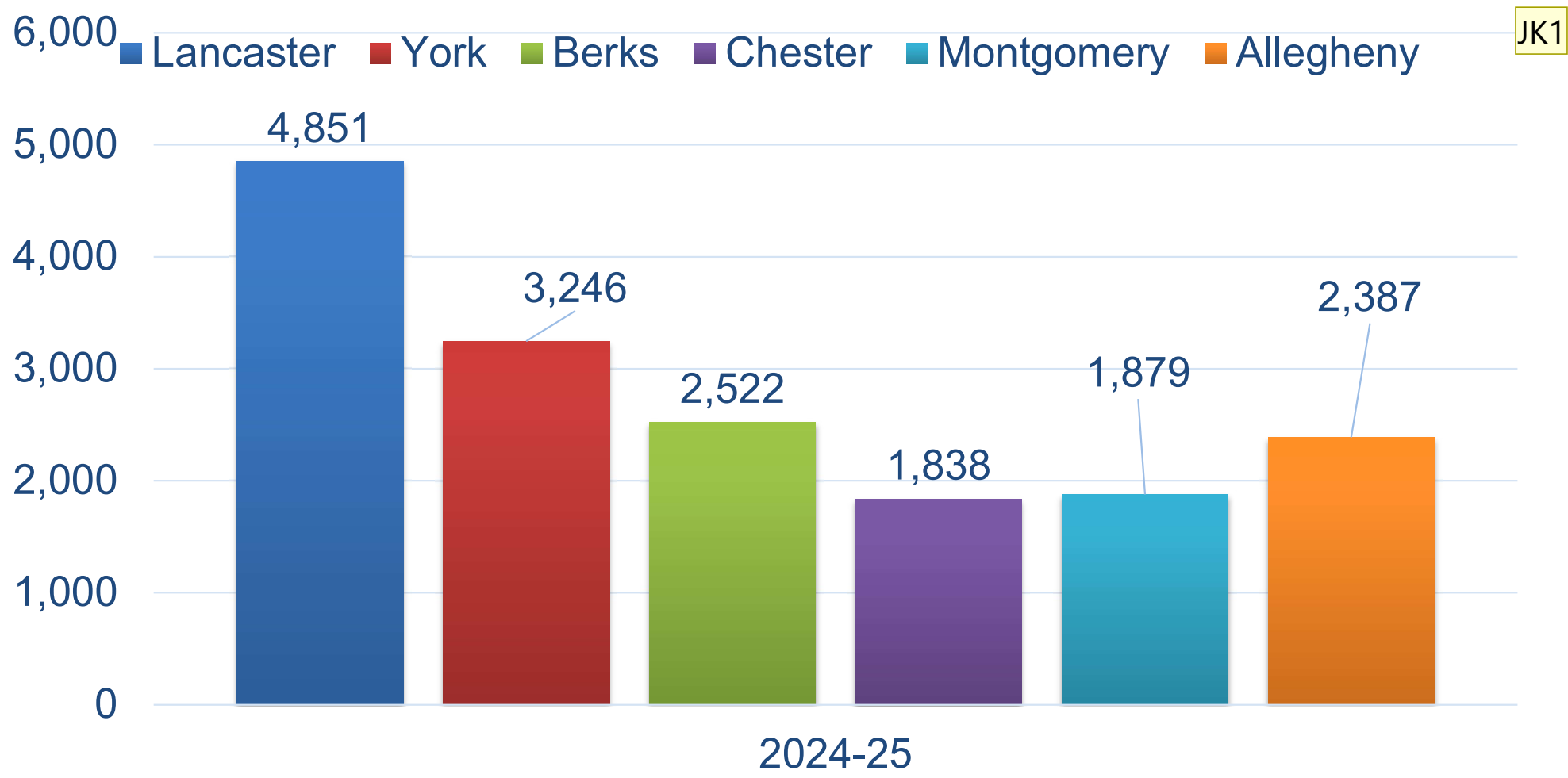
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➤ Home School Students – By Age

Home school enrollment in both age groups has increased more than 10% since 2022-23.



➤ Top Home School Student Counties 2024-25



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What are the other counties in the chart?

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➤ Home Education and Private Tutoring Laws

- The decision to have a home education program or a private tutoring program is a **right**.
- State laws and regulations related to home education and private tutoring:
 - [Section 1327 of the School Code](#) (relating to home education programs)
 - [22 Pa. Code § 11.31a](#) (relating to students not enrolled in public schools due to participation in home education)
 - [22 Pa. Code § 11.31\(b\)\(1\)](#) (relating to students not enrolled in public schools due to private tutoring)

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Tom - I reworked this section because section 1327 is a law in the School Code, not a regulation.

Also, when referring to regulations, best practices is to include a description of what the regulation relates to (as shown)

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➤ Home Education – The Beginning

- A home school or privately tutored program can start at any time during the school year.
- School district approval is not needed to commence either program; however, the required documentation must be submitted.



➤ Home Education – The Start

- A notarized affidavit or an unsworn declaration attest to the fact that a student will be home schooled.
 - An unsworn declaration does **not** need to be notarized.
 - Sample of these documents can be found at www.pa.gov/agencies/education.
- State law requires home school supervisors to submit evidence of the required immunizations, medical/ dental screenings, and health exams for home school students.



➤ Home School Program – Transfer

- A letter of transfer provides info on the status of the home school program.
- A home school family that moves out of a district and into another PA school district should request a letter of transfer from the current district 60 days prior to moving.
- A district should receive a letter of transfer if a home school family moves into your district from another PA school district.



➤ Home Schooling A Student With Special Needs

- If a home school student is identified as having an IEP (individual education program), then a home school parent must have the home school program reviewed and deemed appropriate by a PA certified educator with at least two years of Special Ed experience prior to starting the home school program.



➤ Home School Students With Special Needs

- Special Education Services can be provided at the District's discretion.
- The District is under no obligation to provide services so Districts should have policies related to home school student access to Special Education Services.
- Questions on special education should be sent to:
ra-pdespecial@pa.gov or 1-800-879-2301



➤ Home Education Documents - Beginning

- Some home school families submit as early as July 1st.
- For those that are continuing a home school program, the deadline for submitting paperwork is on or prior to August 1st.



➤ Curriculum and Umbrella Schools

- Home school families have the right to borrow curriculum materials by requesting these items from the school district of residence.
- An ‘umbrella school’ is any alternative source of education which provides curriculum and oversight of homeschooled students to fulfill educational requirements of a state government.
- Abeka, Accelus, Liberty University’s homeschool online program, The Bridge Academy, and the Keystone (K-12) School are examples of umbrella schools.
- Parents using umbrella schools must still follow PA Home School laws.



➤ Home Education and Private Tutoring

- 24 P.S. § 13-1327.1(f.1) allows home school students to participate in extracurricular activities.
- The student must meet the eligibility and tryout criteria that apply to school district students, and must comply with all policies, rules, and regulations of the governing organization of the activity.
- Check your district's academic policies and the PIAA regulations for student athletes.



➤ Academic Courses and CTE Programs

- State law allows home school students to do the following:
 - Participate in cocurricular programs at their resident district
 - Enroll in academic courses at their resident school district
 - Participate in career and technical education (CTE) programs
- Home school students must meet the same criteria that apply to students enrolled in the district and comply with all policies, rules, and regulations of the governing organization.

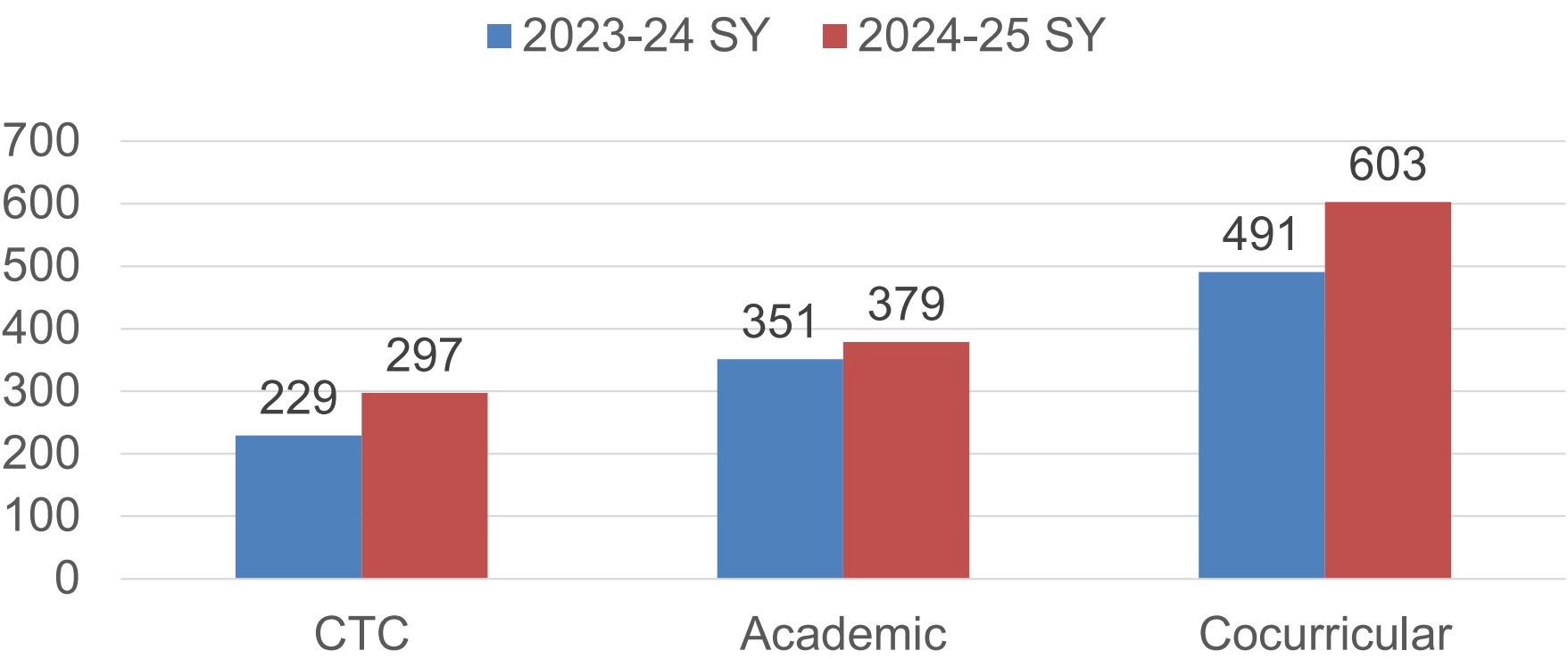
► Points for Consideration

- State law allows up to 25% of a home school student's course load can be provided by the local school district. Districts have created policies to address this.
- Transportation responsibilities – State law addresses transporting home school students
- Provision of technology – This is a district decision.



Enrollment in District Courses and CTE Programs

The number of home school students enrolling in school district courses and CTE programs is growing.



Source: Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) Home School Data Collection, October 27, 2025.

➤ Home School Student Assessments

- Home school students must be assessed in grades 3, 5, and 8, using either the PSSAs or one of [11 other nationally-normed tests](#).
 - Failure or refusal to test is not in compliance with home school law.
 - There is no ‘opt-out.’
- If a parent chooses to have their student take one of the approved nationally-normed tests:
 - The parent is responsible for any costs.
 - The parent must follow the test developer’s security protocols such as not being the proctor for the exam and having a suitable testing environment.
 - The test proctor must be trained.
- PDE recommends the student take the PSSAs; or if the student takes an alternative test, have a home school evaluator who is trained to proctor the exam administer the test in a suitable testing environment.



➤ Assessing Home School Students

- If a home school student takes an academic class in the district that would be tested in a PSSA, PDE suggests the student take that PSSA.
 - However, the PSSA cannot be required.
 - Also, a parent does not need to opt-out if the student does not take the PSSA.
- If a home school student takes a class in the district that would culminate in a Keystone exam (i.e., Algebra I), PDE suggests the student take the associated Keystone exam.



➤ Assessment for Those Skipping a Grade

- If a home school student skips a grade (e.g., completes 8th and 9th grade in one year), PDE recommends that the student complete the PSSA or one of the approved nationally-normed tests for 8th grade and the test results be included in the home school evaluation report.
- The home school evaluation report documents a student's academic progress and may reinforce the decision to skip a grade.



➤ Classroom Diagnostic Tool Access (CDT)

- The CDT is a tool developed based on previously used or vetted PSSA questions.
- The CDT helps teacher to identify areas where a student is doing well or needs more education of concepts, techniques, etc.
- The CDT can be useful to home school families, too.
- PDE recommends students go to their home district for testing or borrow a laptop from the district that has been loaded with the CDT.
- The family and district then can work together to administer and analyze the results.



► Firefly Assessment Tool

- PDE developed the [Firefly Assessment Tool](#) to support assessment of a student's learning.
- Firefly can be useful to home school families, too and may be accessed through the local school district.
- PDE recommends that home school families go to their home district to discuss the use of this tool and how the family and district then can work together to administer and analyze the results.

➤ Home Schooling – End of Year

- A home school evaluation report must be submitted by the home school supervisor for each student on or prior to June 30th to comply with home school law.
- Failure to do so may initiate informal and formal procedures to ensure compliance.
- See pages 48-50 of the [Home School Guide](#).



➤ Private Tutoring Process

- [22 Pa. Code § 11.31\(b\)\(1\)](#) provides guidance relating to students not enrolled in public schools due to private tutoring.
- A private tutoring program can start at any time in the school year, but there must be a letter of assurances sent to the Superintendent prior to its inception.
- The private tutor must be a PA-certified educator and have all applicable background clearances, even if tutoring their own children.



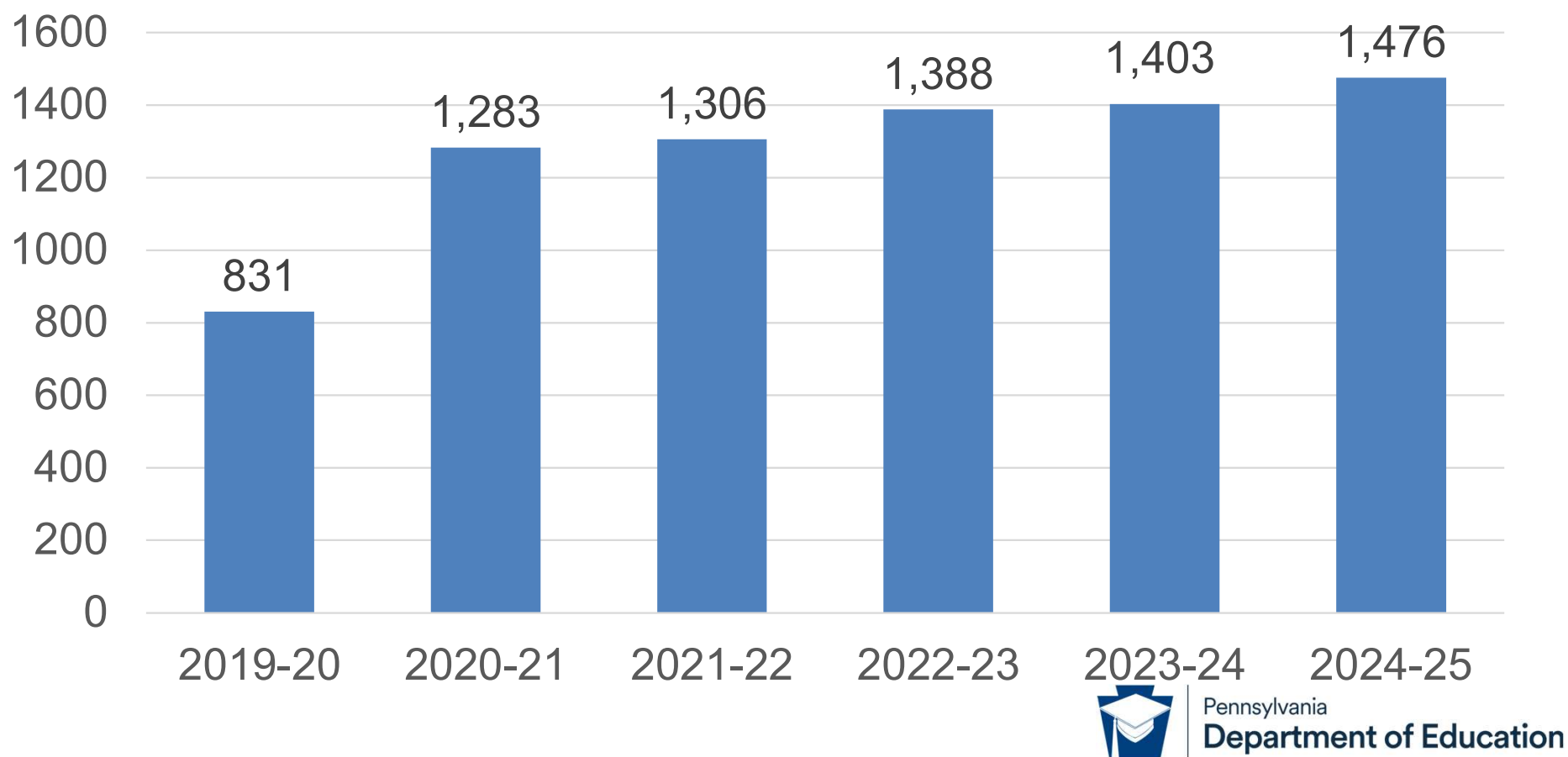
➤ Private Tutoring Program

- The teaching certificate does **not** have to be active and there is no requirement for continuing education.
- Under the law, there is no home school evaluation report, but a district may request a progress update from the family.



➤ Privately Tutored Enrollment – Age 5-21

The number of Pennsylvania students enrolled in private tutoring has increased 77% since 2019-20.



➤ Final Year for a Private Tutored Student

- A private tutoring program cannot culminate in the student receiving a high school diploma.
- In the 12th or final year, the student would have to switch to a home school program, and the parent cannot serve as the home school evaluator.



Home Schoolers/Private Tutoring Students – Enrolling in a District

- A home school student or privately tutored student can transfer into a district as a full-time enrolled student at any time in the school year.
- Placement of student and acceptance of credits earned are at the district's discretion.
- The family will be required to provide the same documentation as any other student that enrolls in the district.



➤ Home School Graduation Process

- The 12th year or final home education evaluation report is submitted once a home school student has met the graduation requirements established in State law.
 - ✓ Four years of English
 - ✓ Three years of Mathematics
 - ✓ Three years of Science
 - ✓ Three years of Social Studies
 - ✓ Two years of Arts and Humanities
- PDE has updated guidance to clarify these requirements for home school students in the Home School Guide

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Link to guide if you plan to post the slides or give the audience access to the presentation

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➤ Home Education Diplomas

- The home school supervisor (parent or legal guardian) and home school evaluator can sign the home school diploma template and confer the degree.
- See [PA State Home School Diploma Template](#)
- PDE has given the authority to grant home school organizations that apply and are approved the right to confer diplomas.
- Currently, PHAA and six other home school organizations are approved to confer their own diplomas and are another possible source of transcripts and diplomas.



➤ Education Verification

- PDE does not receive nor maintain any home school student records.
- Home school supervisors are advised to create a transcript and submit it to the school district for record keeping purposes along with a copy of the home school diploma and 12th year or final evaluation report.



➤ Education Verification

- The school district of residence is responsible for keeping records in accordance with the record retention policies of the district.
- A home school diploma granting organization is a possible source.
- PDE directs record inquires to the student's school district of residence, the home school organization with diploma granting privileges or the home school family.

Resources

- [Home Education and Private Tutoring Guide](#)
- [Basic Education Circulars \(BEC\)](#)
- [Support Groups and Resources](#)
- [Home School Stats](#)



Questions?



➤ Contact/Mission

For information on the Home Education and Private Tutoring programs, please email RA-Home-Education@pa.gov.

The mission of the Department of Education is to ensure that every learner has access to a world-class education system that academically prepares children and adults to succeed as productive citizens. Further, the Department seeks to establish a culture that is committed to improving opportunities throughout the commonwealth by ensuring that technical support, resources, and optimal learning environments are available for all students, whether children or adults.



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