

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON HOME INSTRUCTION

The State Department of Education does not directly supervise home instruction. In Rhode Island, approval of home instruction occurs at the local school district level. If you are thinking of home-schooling your child, please call your local school superintendent's office for information.

The information contained in this document is meant to give a simple, general overview of the process of home instruction in Rhode Island. This document is not a legal memorandum. Specific questions should be directed to your local school department.

If I want to home-school my child, do I need to have a teaching certificate or any other certificate or special qualifications? No, you only have to show that you are able to provide “thorough and efficient” instruction.

Do I need to notify the local district of my intention to home school? Yes. You will need school committee approval before you begin home instruction.

How do I get permission to do home instruction? You need to present your proposed home schooling program to your local school committee for approval. Your plan will need to show that you will teach the required subjects. There should be agreement between you and your local school committee regarding how your child's academic progress will be evaluated.

What curriculum outline do I follow? You may copy the public school curriculum or use correspondence courses, or you may design your own curriculum.

Where do I get a curriculum outline? Check with your local school department or public library. There are also magazines and web sites that offer information on home instruction.

What subjects am I required to teach? State law requires that you teach reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, history of the United States, history of Rhode Island, principles of American Government, civics, health and physical education. Also, beginning with fourth grade, history and government of Rhode Island must be taught. In high school, the U.S. Constitution and Rhode Island Constitution must be taught.

Where do I get textbooks? Local school districts must loan textbooks in science, math, and modern foreign languages, as well as texts for some other subject areas. However, the only books that can be loaned are books being used in the public schools of Rhode Island. Other instructional materials will have to be purchased by you.

How many hours a day do I need to home school? The same number of hours public school is in session in your district – generally five and one half hours per day, for at least 180 days per year.

What information do I need to keep track of? You must keep attendance records. If you and your school committee agree that you will test at home, you must keep progress reports/test scores.

What kind of testing am I responsible for? The parent and the school committee must agree on a way of evaluating your child's progress in all required subjects.

Where is testing done? The site of testing is subject to agreement by you and representatives of your district. Testing at the home is an option you should discuss with district representatives, if you're interested in this.

Does my child have to go to the school for testing or any other reason? Not necessarily. You may propose testing at a site off school premises, and your district may agree.

To whom do I submit the attendance records and test scores? Regular reports should be submitted to the person in charge of home schooling in your district.

Can my child take part in extra-curricular activities at school? While the Commissioner of Education has encouraged all school districts to allow participation when space is available, each school committee has authority to decide whether or not to allow a home-schooled child to participate in public school programs and public school extra-curricular activities. Additional requirements must be met by children who wish to participate in Rhode Island Interscholastic League athletic programs.

Does my child receive a diploma at the end of the 12th grade? No, but your child may take the G.E.D. test to receive a high school equivalency diploma. Instead of a diploma, some districts issue a "certificate of completion of home-schooling program."

Can a home-schooled student go to a 4 year college afterwards? Some colleges do not require a high school diploma and will accept home-schooled students. You will have to research which colleges permit this.

If my child has special needs or an IEP, will the district assist me in meeting those needs? If your child is eligible for special education services, you should discuss this with the Special Education Office of your local school district to determine how these needs will be met.

Does home instruction have to start in September, or can it start at any point in the year? It is not required that home instruction start in September, but the home program must be substantially equivalent to the amount of time that students would get in the public schools.

Which office in my local district should I call for more information? For general information, call the Superintendent's Office at your local school department. For information on home instruction for a child with special education needs, call the Special Education Office at your local school department.

What if my local School Committee denies approval of my home instruction plan? The school committee's decision may be appealed to: Commissioner of Education, Dr. Ken Wagner, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903.

The above is not intended to be a definitive ruling and not intended to be a conclusive statement of the law. For more information, please call the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Legal Office at 401-222-8979 or your local school department.