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Overview of At-Home Instruction in Rhode Island

The information contained in this document is meant to provide families interested in homeschooling their student(s) with a simple, general overview of the process of at-home instruction in Rhode Island. This document is not intended to provide legal advice or otherwise constitute legal guidance.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (“RIDE”) does not directly supervise at-home instruction. In Rhode Island, approval of at-home instruction occurs exclusively at the local school district level.

In order to initiate the process of homeschooling your child, you must contact your local school committee of the town where your child resides¹ and present an at-home instruction plan that complies with R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-19-2. This statute provides that “at-home instruction shall be approved only when it complies with the following requirements”:

- (1) The period of attendance for the homeschooled student is “substantially equal to that required by law in public schools”;
- (2) Attendance records for the homeschooled student are kept and returned to the school committee, the superintendent of schools, truant officers, and RIDE, and are made the same as such records kept by the public school;
- (3) Reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, the history of the United States, the history of Rhode Island, and the principles of American government must be taught in the English language substantially to the same extent as these subjects are required to be taught in the public school; and
- (4) The teaching of the English language and other subjects listed above “shall be thorough and efficient.”

You may, but are not required to, provide at-home instruction on additional subjects and may teach any/all of those subjects in any language in addition to English. There is no minimum education requirement for parents seeking to homeschool their student.

¹ Residency for homeschooling purposes is governed by R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-64-1, which generally provides that “[a] child shall be deemed to be a resident of the city or town where his or her parents reside.”

Once you have presented your at-home instruction plan, your local school must then approve or deny the at-home instruction based on whether the instruction meets the above statutory requirements.

Any person aggrieved by the action of the school committee either in approving or refusing to approve an at-home instruction plan may appeal the school committee's action to RIDE under R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-19-2. Upon receipt of such an appeal, RIDE will schedule a hearing to examine and decide the appeal without cost to the parties.

Your local school committee must loan textbooks for use by your homeschooled student free of charge. R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-23-2(a) specifically states: "The school committee . . . shall furnish upon request . . . textbooks to all students in grades K-12 in the fields of mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, English/language arts and history/social studies, appearing on the list of textbooks published by the commissioner as provided in § 16-23-3 to all pupils of elementary and secondary school grades resident in the community." This textbook loan requirement extends to e-books and other digital materials used as textbooks in these core classes by the public school. The [State Approved Textbook List](#) is accessible on the RIDE website.

If you are considering homeschooling your child or have specific questions regarding at-home instruction, please call your local school superintendent's office for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions on At-Home Instruction

Do I need to notify my local school district of my intention to homeschool?

Yes. R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-19-1(a) requires that your at-home instruction plan be approved by your local school committee before you begin at-home instruction. If you do not obtain school committee approval before removing your child from the public school setting and starting at-home instruction, then your child may be subject to the consequences of failing to attend school under the compulsory attendance statute (R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-19-1).

How do I get permission to homeschool my child?

You need to present your proposed at-home instruction plan to your local school committee for approval. Your plan will need to show that you will teach the required subjects and that this teaching will be “thorough and efficient.” There should also be agreement between you and your local school committee regarding how your child’s academic progress will be evaluated. This process may be initiated by submitting a letter of intent to homeschool to your superintendent’s office, but you should consult with your local school department for more specific information.

If I am moving into a new school district with the intention of homeschooling, does my new school district need to enroll my child before I begin at-home instruction?

Yes. In accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-19-1(a) and § 16-19-2, all at-home instruction programs must be “approved by the school committee of the town where the child resides.” This means that the student must first be registered and enrolled in the new district of residence prior to the approval of a homeschooling program. The new district would then be required to continue monitoring the homeschooled student’s attendance and academic progress.

If my child receives special education services under Section 504 or the IDEA, will the district assist me in meeting those needs?

Rhode Island does not have a state statute or regulation governing special education access for homeschooled students. However, Rhode Island does require districts to provide homeschooled students with FAPE in a similar manner as parentally-placed private school students. The Commissioner has previously decided that “Rhode Island state education laws do not restrict parents from homeschooling their children simply because they are eligible for or receiving special education services under the [IDEA].” [*Kimberly J. v. Coventry School Committee, RIDE No. 0040-00 \(Dec. 5, 2000\)*](#). In approving any at-home instruction program, the local school committee must consider the provision of special education services for any eligible student to ensure the at-home instruction is “thorough and efficient.” Once an at-home instruction program is approved, it is incumbent upon the IEP team to meet and discuss how the student will access special education services and draft an updated IEP for the new setting. You should contact your local school department’s Special Education Office with any specific questions or for more information.

If I want to homeschool my child, do I need to have a teaching certificate or any other certificate or special qualifications?

No. You only have to show that your child will receive instruction that is “thorough and efficient” pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-19-2.

What subjects am I required to teach?

Rhode Island law requires that you teach reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, the history of the United States, the history of Rhode Island, the principles of American Government, civics, health and physical education. You may also teach other subjects. All the at-home instruction subjects must be taught in English, but may also be taught in any other language.

What curriculum outline do I follow?

For the required subjects, you may copy the public school's curriculum or use corresponding courses, or you may design your own curriculum. The [Basic Education Program \("BEP"\)](#), 200-RICR-20-10-1, may also be helpful to you as these Regulations include a framework for a comprehensive curriculum that is used in the public schools.

Where do I get a curriculum outline?

In addition to consulting the BEP, check with your local school department or public library. There are also many online sources that offer information on at-home instruction, some of which are provided at the end of this document.

Can I use online programs for virtual instruction in my at-home instruction plan?

Any use of an online program in your proposed at-home instruction plan must be determined and approved by your local school committee.

Where do I get textbooks?

Local school districts must loan certain textbooks, including e-books, in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, English/language arts and history/social studies, that appear on the State Approved Textbook List published annually by the Commissioner. You are responsible for the purchase of other instructional materials needed for your child's at-home instruction program. Additional information regarding the textbook loan program may be found on the RIDE website: <https://ride.ri.gov/instruction-assessment/instructional-initiatives-resources/textbook-search>.

How many hours a day do I need to homeschool?

The period of attendance must be substantially equal to that required in public schools. School districts in Rhode Island are currently required to provide a minimum of one thousand eighty (1,080) school hours during each school year, which is the equivalent of a 5 ½ hour day for at least 180 days per year. The at-home instruction does not have to exactly align with the public school calendar.

What kind of testing am I responsible for?

The parent and school committee should agree on a way of evaluating your child's progress in all the required at-home instruction subjects. This may include testing in the required subjects at regular intervals, but should ultimately be decided during the process of approving your at-home instruction plan.

Where is testing done?

If your at-home instruction plan includes testing as the method of evaluating your child's progress in his/her home instruction program, the site of testing is subject to agreement by you and your local school committee. You may agree to conduct the testing at your home or at the public school.

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 also keep progress reports/test scores. Regular reports must be submitted to your local superintendent, or whoever else may be designated as the point person for your at-home instruction.

Can my child take part in extracurricular activities at school?

The Commissioner has encouraged all school districts to allow participation in academic, extracurricular and inter-scholastic activities on a space available basis, and at no cost to the district or school. However, each school committee has authority to decide whether or not to allow a homeschooled child to participate in public school programs extracurricular 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 upon graduating?

It depends. In Rhode Island, some districts issue a "certificate of completion of homeschooling program" while others issue a certificate denoting the completion of individual courses for purposes of the parent maintaining the student's academic record. Your child may take the G.E.D. test to receive a high school equivalency diploma.

Can a homeschooled student go to college after completion of an at-home instruction program?

Yes. You should check with each college to determine what requirements must be met for admission.

What if my local school committee denies approval of my at-home instruction plan?

The school committee's decision may be appealed to the Commissioner. For questions regarding an appeal, please contact the RIDE Legal Office at 401-222-8979 or Legal@ride.ri.gov.

Additional Resources

The below provided list of resources is intended only to provide additional, general information to families interested in homeschooling their student. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor does RIDE assert any partnership or other relationship with any of the organizations below.

[Johns Hopkins Homeschool Hub](#)

[Home School Legal Defense Association \(“HSLDA”\)](#)

[Rhode Island Guild of Home Teachers \(“RIGHT”\)](#)

[EnrichRI](#)