

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 intended to provide legal advice. Specific questions on home instruction 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 instruction 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. R.I. Basic Education Program Regulations may also be helpful to you, as they include a framework for a comprehensive curriculum that is used in the public schools. The BEP may be found at 200-RICR-20-10-1 and the section on curriculum is §1.2.1.

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 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.

Where do I get textbooks? Local school districts must loan certain textbooks, including e-books, in English/language arts, history/social studies, science, math, and modern foreign languages, as well as texts for some other subject areas. The textbooks available for loan under the “textbook loan program” are on a list published annually by the Commissioner of Education. You are responsible for the purchase of other instructional materials needed for your child's home instruction program.

Can I use online programs for virtual instruction in my home instruction plan? It depends on the approval of the local school committee. Any use of an online program in your proposed home instruction plan must be approved by the local school committee. RIDE does have

regulations regarding virtual learning (200-RICR-20-10-5), but these regulations address the use of virtual learning only in public school settings.

How many hours a day do I need to home school? 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.

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 should agree on a way of evaluating your child's progress in all required subjects. This may include testing in the required subjects at regular intervals.

Where is testing done? If testing is 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 representatives of your district. Testing at the home is an option you should discuss with district representatives, if you are 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 evaluations of my child's progress in the home instruction program? Regular reports should be submitted to the person in charge of home instruction in your district.

Can my child take part in extra-curricular activities at school? The Commissioner of Education has encouraged all school districts to allow participation in academic, extra-curricular and inter-scholastic activities on a space available basis, no cost to the district or school basis. However, 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? It depends. In Rhode Island some districts issue a "certificate of completion of home-schooling 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 home-schooled student go to college after completion of a program of home instruction? Some colleges do not require a high school diploma and will accept home-schooled students. We recommend that you check with the specific colleges your child is considering.

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 duration of the home program must be substantially equivalent to the amount of time that students are required to attend 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 the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Angélica Infante-Green, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903.

Are there groups that I can contact for additional information and/or support? Yes. The Home School Legal Defense Association, hsllda.org; RIGHT, www.rihomeschool.com and EnrichRI, www.enrichri.org are organizations dedicated to assisting homeschoolers. Other groups may also be available as well.

For more information, please call the Legal Office at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at 401-222-8979, e-mail Legal@ride.ri.gov or contact your local school department.