

**GUIDANCE**  
**FOR**  
**THE APPROVAL OF NON-PUBLIC**  
**SCHOOLS**  
**IN RHODE ISLAND**

**The purpose for providing guidance for approval of non-public schools to ensure that non-public schools meet all legal requirements in serving their students. The Rhode Island General Laws regarding non-public schools require that curriculum and administrative procedures in non-public schools be substantially equivalent to those required in the public schools. Therefore, as curriculum and graduation requirements change for the public schools in the state it is important that non-public schools align their policies to mirror the requirements for the public schools. Public schools are required to adopt performance based graduation requirements for all students graduating in 2008 and beyond and non-public schools should be examining their curricular offerings and graduation requirements to ensure that they are substantially equivalent with those required in the public schools.**

**Essential Rhode Island General Laws for Education can be found at:**

**<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/Statutes.html>**

**Please refer to Title 16 - Education for all statutes regarding transportation, the textbook loan program, curricular requirements, the length of the school year, health and safety requirements, and related education requirements. Other federal and state laws and regulations protect students from discrimination based on gender, race, color, religion, disability and sexual orientation in non-public schools.**

***MOST FREQUENTLY REQUESTED REGULATIONS OR QUESTIONS  
REGARDING STUDENT SERVICES IN NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

What are the requirements for a student's time in school for the academic year?

The length of the school year for students in the non-public schools must be substantially equivalent to that required in the public schools – 180 day year exclusive of holidays. (R.I.G.L. 16-2-2 and 16-19-2)

What are the requirements for a student's instructional time per day?

Effective with the 2007-2008 school year a kindergarten day shall not be less than 2 1/2 hours. An elementary school day shall not be less than five and one half (5 1/2) hours excluding lunch, pre and post school teacher time, recess and any other time that is not actual instructional time. A secondary school day shall not be less than five and one-half hours (5 1/2) excluding lunch, study halls, homeroom, common planning time, student passing time, pre- and post-school teacher time, and any other time that is not actual instructional time.

The regulations governing the Length of the School Day contain new procedures for the approval of specific approaches to meeting the hours per day requirements. Schools have many options to present the minimum aggregate minutes of instruction per year in a variety of alternative schedules. All non-public schools are encouraged to refer to the 2004 Amendments to the Length of School Day regulations and to determine what approach will work best for the students and school community.

What are the requirements for qualifications of school staff?

The faculty and staff shall be large enough to carry out the program of the school. All personnel shall be of high character and integrity and shall have the knowledge, training, and experience adequate for the positions they hold.

All teachers in non-public schools must have a bachelor's degree, a criminal records check, and demonstrated competency in the content area or grade levels they teach. Teachers are expected to continue to enroll in courses and/or to participate in seminars and other programs, which will further develop their professional competencies.

The school health program as defined by state statute and regulation shall be staffed by personnel whose qualifications are substantially equivalent to their counterparts in public schools. (R16-21-SCHO Part II, Section 3.1)

What is the regulatory guidance regarding curriculum especially the core academic subjects?

Each school shall have a clearly stated educational policy, cooperatively developed and written by the faculty and administration. The statement shall set forth the objectives of the school and the philosophy underlying the methods used to attain these objectives.

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Each school shall have a carefully planned program of study and activities consistent with its policy and objectives, which shall be approved by the Commissioner of Education.

State statutes set forth certain specific curriculum requirements for all public and non-public schools. Each school must provide all children in attendance with instruction in reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, the history of the United States, the history of Rhode Island and the principles of American government, each shall be taught in the English language. (R.I.G.L. 16-19-2)

Physical Education, health and the arts must also be included in the instructional program. Instruction in the statutorily required content areas should be taught in a manner that provides breadth and depth that is substantially equivalent to that of the public schools. For state grade level standards in math, English and language arts, and science, visit:

<http://www.ridoe.net/standards/default.htm>

<http://www.ridoe.net/assessment/AssessmentSchedule.htm>

Each school shall provide all children in attendance with instruction in the principles of popular and representative government as enunciated in the Constitutions of Rhode Island and the United States. Commencing with the fourth grade in elementary schools instruction shall be given in history and government of Rhode Island, and in every high school thorough instruction shall be given in the Constitution and government of Rhode Island and in the Constitution and government of the United States. (R.I.G.L. 16-22-2)

In the study of history of the United States and of Rhode Island, there shall be included the major contributions made by African-Americans and other racial and ethnic groups in the development of the United States and the State of Rhode Island.

Each school shall provide all children in attendance with health education programs in grades kindergarten through twelve as appropriate. The health education program in a non-public school must be substantially equivalent to that required in public schools and defined in Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs of the

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Health.  
(R16-21-SCHO, Part II, Section 3.1)

Are there any resources and or materials available to the non-public schools to help implement a high quality curriculum?

The textbook loan program allows for all students in non-public schools to request and borrow, from the home district, any math, science, ELA, social studies, and/or language arts textbooks that are on the state approved textbook list [www.ridoe.net/state/textbooklist](http://www.ridoe.net/state/textbooklist) The textbook loan statute reads as follows:

R.I.G.L. 16-23-2. Loan of textbooks.

- (a) The school committee of every community as it is defined in § 16-7-16 shall furnish upon request, at the expense of the community, 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 of elementary and secondary education as provided in § 16-23-3, to all pupils of elementary and secondary school grades resident in the community, the textbooks to be loaned to the pupils free of charge, subject to any rules and regulations as to care and custody that the school committee may prescribe.
- (b) Every school committee shall also furnish at the expense of the community all other textbooks and school supplies used in the public schools of the community, the other textbooks and supplies to be loaned to the pupils of the public schools free of charge, subject to any rules and regulations as to care and custody that the school committee may prescribe. School books removed from school use may be distributed to pupils, and any textbook may become the property of a pupil who has completed the use of it in school, subject to rules and regulations prescribed by the school committee.
- (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to forbid requiring or accepting from a pupil a deposit of a reasonable amount of money as a guarantee for the return of school property other than the books and supplies required in this section to be loaned free of charge, provided that the school committee shall make suitable rules and regulations for the safekeeping and return of deposits; and, provided, further, that in establishing schedules for deposits, the school committee should include provision for waiver of deposit due to financial hardship.

What are the Basic Education Requirements for the granting of a diploma?

The minimum requirements for a student to graduate from an approved non-public secondary school (at the current time) are sixteen (16) units, earned in grades 9

through 12 including four (4) units in English, two (2) units in Social Studies to include a unit in United States History and Government, two (2) units in Mathematics, two (2) units in Science and six (6) units in electives including health and physical education annually as required by statute. Graduation by Proficiency Requirements (see attached) will change the requirements of granting a diploma in the public school by the year 2009. It is prudent for all non-public schools to be aware of the performance based graduation requirements adopted by local communities so that all students moving into and out of the public and non-public schools are prepared to meet these rigorous requirements.

**Please see link below regarding the update to graduation requirements. The number of Carnegie units has been changed from sixteen (16) to twenty (20), and to a proficiency based diploma system. These regulations affect students in your middle and high schools now.**

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/HighSchoolReform/PDFs/HIGH%20school%20reform/TA%20Bulletin%20Final%2013105.pdf>

**What are the regulations regarding the maintenance and retention of student records?**

Records Retention Schedule LG5 - Public School Records describe all the time requirements for retaining student, teacher and program files. Please be sure that non-public school records are maintained and can be accessed for follow up by students or agencies. For public school regulations regarding student records see:

<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/Statutes.html>[www.rilin.ri.us.state](http://www.rilin.ri.us.state)

<http://www.sec.state.ri.us/Archives/src/index.html>

Every teacher in any private school shall keep a register of the names of all students attending the school, their sex and ages, names of parents or guardians, the time each student enters and leaves the school, and their daily attendance, and shall prepare any report required by the school committee or Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (R.I.G.L. 16-12-4)

**What are the requirements for fire drill reporting and evacuation of students in an emergency?**

It shall be the duty of the principal or other person in charge of every public school or private school, to instruct and train the pupils by means of drills so that they may in a sudden emergency be able to leave school buildings and dormitories in the shortest possible time and without confusion or panic. In all schools but colleges, universities, or post-secondary institutions, there shall be fifteen (15) drills or rapid

dismissals during the school year, at least eight (8) of which shall be held during the months of September, October, and November. The remaining seven (7) drills or rapid dismissals shall be obstructed by means of which at least one or more exits and stairways in the school building are blocked off or not used and at least two (2) of the obstructed drills shall be held during the months of September and October. (R.I.G.L. 16-21-4)

In residence facilities in private schools there shall be at least four (4) drills or rapid dismissals during the academic year for each school building or residence facility, at least two (2) of which shall be held between the months of September through December inclusive. The remaining two (2) drills shall be held between the months of January through June inclusive. Any college, university, or post-secondary institution, which holds summer session, shall hold a drill or rapid dismissal during the first full week of the summer session.

At least one drill or rapid dismissal shall be obstructed so that at least one or more exits or stairways in the school building or dormitory are blocked off or not used.

For purposes of this section "residence facility" shall mean dormitory, fraternity, sorority, or any other type of residence hall, whether on campus or off campus, owned or leased by a college, university, post-secondary institution, public schools, or private school with accommodations for twenty (20) or more students. (R.I.G.L. 16-21-4)