

A Question and Answer Guide to Home Schooling Your Child



Westerly Public Schools Home Schooling Handbook

Westerly Public Schools
23 Highland Avenue
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Rhode Island Law

The State of Rhode Island provides requirements for the home instruction of students through Rhode Island General Law 16-19-1, “a child may receive a course of at-home instruction approved by the school committee of the town wherein the child resides” as long as:

- The period of attendance is “substantially equal” to that of the public schools
- An attendance register is kept and
- The teaching in the required subjects listed below is “thorough and efficient”.
 1. Reading
 2. Writing
 3. Geography
 4. Arithmetic
 5. United States and Rhode Island History
 6. Principles of American Government
 7. Health and Physical Education “substantially equivalent” to that required in the
 8. public schools (16-22-2 and 16-22-4)

In addition to the state requirements, the Westerly School Committee also requires some type of evaluation component. This requirement may be met through the form of a report card, written evaluations, dated work samples or other means of evaluation. Annual testing or standardized testing is not required by Rhode Island General Law, but may be used as a type of evaluation component solely by choice of the parents.



The Home Schooling Process

1. Submit a letter of intent notifying the Assistant Superintendent of your intent to instruct your child or children at home on a yearly basis. This letter is called the “Letter of Intent” and must include the curriculum with all subjects required under Rhode Island General Laws to be taught. The Letter of Intent must also reflect that the parent(s) or guardian(s) will comply with the Rhode Island general laws governing home schooling.
2. Approximately 30 days after the Letter of Intent is submitted, the parent will receive a letter of acceptance or denial for their home instruction. If the School Committee should deny a request for home schooling, the parents may appeal to the State Department of Education and have a right to a hearing (16-19-2)
3. An attendance register must be maintained to show that the home schooled student has completed the equivalent of 181 or more days of instruction.
4. It is recommended that a student portfolio be maintained with student work samples and evidence of student assessment.

Frequently Asked Questions about Home Schooling:

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 curriculum to the assistant superintendent 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, 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 (a list of sites has been included in this booklet) that offer information on home instruction. Regional or national standards for the core academic subjects are available upon request. The Rhode Island Department of Education web site (www.ridoe.net) lists specific grade level expectations in reading, writing and math.

What subjects am I required to teach?

State law requires that you teach reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, and history of the United States, history of Rhode Island, principles of American Government, 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 that public school is in session in your district – six and one half (6 1/2) hours per day, for at least 181 days per year.

What information do I need to keep track of?

You must keep attendance records. You should also keep a portfolio of the student's work. The portfolio should include work samples from each of the required subject areas and evidence of student assessment.

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 Assistant Superintendent.

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.

These include the following RIIL regulations:

1. The student must be listed on the rolls of the school and certified to the Rhode Island Department of Education as a student.
2. The home school must furnish to the school and certify the academic grades and the school must record them on the official school records on a quarterly basis.
3. If a student is ineligible for academic and/or disciplinary reasons and subsequently becomes home schooled he/she may not participate in interscholastic athletics during the period of ineligibility.
4. The school must approve the request of the home school students to compete on its teams.
5. All other requirements of the Rules and Regulations must be followed with the regular school certifying the eligibility of the home school student. For a copy of these rules, contact the Rhode Island Interscholastic League at 272-9844.

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.

Can a home-schooled student go to a 4 year college afterwards?

Colleges do not always require a high school diploma and accept home schooled students with student work samples and portfolios. 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 Westerly Public Schools Special Education Office 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 Westerly Public Schools Assistant Superintendent's Office (401-315-1517). For information on home instruction for a child with special education needs, call the Westerly Public Schools Special Education Office (401-315-1533).

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 Education.

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 222-8979 or your local school department.

Home Schooling Web Sites

The Rhode Island Guild of Home Teachers- <http://www.rihomeschool.com/content1298>

"About Home School" - <http://homeschooling.about.com>

"Make the Lesson Connection: - <http://www.microsoft.com/education/default.mspx>

"Home schooling at Calvert School" - <http://homeschool.calvertschool.org/>

"Home Education Programs for Children" - <http://www.headsprout.com/home/>

"Home schooling with Laurel Springs School" - <http://www.laurelsprings.com>

"Home Life Inc. - Home school Worlds" - <http://www.home-school.com>

"Internet Home School" - www.internethomeschool.com

"National Home Education Research Institute" - <http://www.nheri.org>

"e-Tutor-Home schooling Corner" - <http://www.e-tutor.com/homeschool>

"Home school Central" - <http://www.e-tutor.com/homeschool>

Homeschooler Information Network" - <http://homeschooler.com>

These sites are available on the internet. Inclusion in this handbook does not signify an endorsement by the district.