

HOME SCHOOLING

This policy applies to parents who reside in the towns of RSU 13 and who wish to have their children fulfill the compulsory school attendance law through equivalent education by home schooling or by attendance at a private school that is approved for attendance purposes or recognized as providing equivalent instruction in accordance with state law must comply with the provisions of 20-A MRSA § 5001-A(3)(A)(4). In this policy “home schooling” will be used to refer to the instructional program of any student meeting compulsory attendance in one of these ways. In this policy “parent” is used to refer to the parent or legal guardian of a home schooling student.

I. Application and Approval

A. Application

Within ten calendar days of the beginning of home schooling, the parent must provide a written notice simultaneously to the Superintendent of RSU 13 and to the Commissioner of the Department of Education stating the intent to provide home schooling. The notice must contain the following information:

- 1) The name, signature, and address of the parent;
- 2) The name and age of the student;
- 3) The date the home schooling program will begin;
- 4) A statement of assurance that indicates the home schooling program will provide at least 175 days annually of instruction and will provide instruction in: English and language arts, math, science, social studies, physical education, health education, library skills, fine arts, and, in at least one grade from grade 6 to 12, Maine studies. At one grade level from grade 7 to 12, the student will demonstrate proficiency in the use of computers; and
- 5) A statement of assurance that indicates that the home schooling program will include an annual assessment of the student’s academic progress that includes at least one of the forms of assessment described in 20-A MRSA § 5001-A(3)(A)(4)(b) and paragraph B below.

B. Reapplication

On or before September 1 of each subsequent year of home schooling, the student’s parent must file a letter with the Superintendent of RSU 13 and to the Commissioner stating the intention to continue providing home schooling and enclose a copy of one of the following forms of annual assessment of the student’s academic progress:

- 1) A standardized achievement test administered by RSU 13 or through other arrangements approved by the Commissioner. If the test is administered through RSU 13, that administration must be agreed to by the Superintendent’s designee of RSU 13 prior to submission of the written notice of intent to provide home instruction;
- 2) A test appropriate to the student’s home schooling program and developed by the Superintendent’s designee of RSU 13 must be agreed to by the Superintendent’s designee of RSU 13 prior to submission of the written notice of intent to provide home instruction;
- 3) A review and acceptance of the student’s progress by an identified individual who holds a current Maine teacher’s certificate;
- 4) A review and acceptance of the student’s progress based on, but not limited to, a presentation of an educational portfolio by the student to a local area home schooling

support group whose membership for this purpose includes a currently certified Maine teacher or administrator; or

- 5) A review and acceptance of the student’s progress by a local advisory board selected by the Superintendent’s designee that includes one administrative unit employee and two home instruction tutors. A “home instruction tutor” means the parent or other person who acts or will act as a primary teacher of the student in the home instruction program. This provision must be agreed to by the Superintendent’s designee prior to submission of the written notice of intent to provide home instruction.

C. Privacy of Records

Dissemination of any information filed under 20-A MRSA § 5001-A(3)(A) (which applies to alternatives to attendance at public day school, including home schooling) is governed by the provisions of 20-A MRSA § 6001 (dissemination of information); the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 USC § 1232g (2002); and the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 20 USC § 1401-1487 (2002), except that “directory information” as defined by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is confidential and is not subject to public disclosure unless the parent specifically permits disclosure in writing or a judge orders otherwise. Copies of any information filed under 20-A MRSA § 5001-A(3)(A) must be maintained by the parent until the home schooling program concludes. The records must be made available to the Commissioner upon request.

D. Program Discontinued

If the home schooling program is discontinued, students of compulsory school age must be enrolled in a public school or an equivalent instruction alternative as provided for by law.

E. Board Responsibility

The Board accepts no responsibility for the unit in the application, review, approval, or oversight of home schooling programs except as provided for by law or this policy.

F. Student Roster

The Superintendent shall maintain a roster of all students eligible to attend school within RSU 13 who are receiving equivalent instruction, as provided in Department of Education rules.

II. Participation by Home-Schooled Students in RSU 13 Programs

The RSU 13 School Board acknowledges the provisions for equivalent instruction under Maine law. The Board further recognizes the Legislature’s statement that the term “equivalent” is intended to mean meeting state standards for alternate or other instruction and is not intended to mean the same as the education delivered in the public school system. In addition, it is the intention of the Board to cooperate in the home instruction of any child who resides in RSU 13 to the degree that the level of cooperation does not interfere with the responsibilities to the students enrolled in RSU 13 regular programs. Furthermore, participation of students in such school programs shall be limited to home schooling students whose home schooling programs are in compliance with applicable Maine law and Department of Education regulations. In order to maintain an efficient and orderly school program, the Board directs the Superintendent to develop procedures, as appropriate, regarding the availability of RSU 13 resources and services to home schooling students who would otherwise be eligible to attend school in RSU 13. The procedures shall be in accord with the following provisions:

A. Provision of Information

At the request of a home schooling student or parent, RSU 13 shall make available to the student, in a form determined by the school, information regarding access to RSU 13 school activities and attendance at RSU 13 schools. This information shall include:

- 1) Requirements regarding initial health and developmental screening for motor skills, vision, hearing, and immunization; and
- 2) Criteria for participation of home schooling students in supplemental or cocurricular activities.

B. Permitted Participation

Home schooling students may enroll in or audit specific, day-school classes provided that the student's attendance is regular, the class is deemed to be age and grade appropriate, and all prerequisite course requirements are met. In addition, the following shall also apply:

- 1) The student or the parent, on the student's behalf, will apply in writing to and receive written approval from the Superintendent's designee. Approval may not be unreasonably withheld;
- 2) The student will demonstrate prior satisfactory academic achievement consistent with school unit policy and procedures applicable to all students;
- 3) The student will comply with behavioral, disciplinary, attendance and other classroom rules applicable to all students. If a student fails to comply, the school may withhold credit or terminate the student's participation;
- 4) The student may use the same transportation as all other students in the school unit as long as additional expenses are not incurred and vehicle capacity is not exceeded; and
- 5) The student enrolled for credit will complete all assignments and tests as required of all students in the same class. The student auditing a class is excused from quizzes and tests.

C. Special Education Services

Special Education Services will be available to eligible special education students in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

D. Admission to Regular Program and Placement

A student who has been home-schooled and who seeks admission to the regular school program will be placed in a grade commensurate with the student's age and level of the student's academic achievement. Placement must be guided by the following:

- 1) For students who transfer into school from an educational program that is not required to meet the standards of the system of Learning Results, the principal of the receiving school shall determine the value of the student's prior educational experience toward meeting these standards;
- 2) Appropriate school staff may make recommendations concerning placement based on, but not limited to, factors such as the student's completed curricula and record of achievement, conferences with the student's parent/guardian, and results of test administered to the student; and
- 3) The grade placement decision shall be made by the principal. The principal's decision may be appealed to the Superintendent, whose decision shall be final.

- 4) Placement of home schooling students who wish to be readmitted to the school program will be determined by the principal who shall consult with members of the professional staff to the extent appropriate and, as deemed necessary, make a reasonable determination that the requisite academic standards have been met, and collect from parents actual samples of coursework (e.g., homework, papers, examinations). The principal may also direct that a test or tests be administered to help determine the student's progress toward meeting the content standards of the Learning Results for the purpose of determining an appropriate grade level. The decision of the principal may be appealed to the Superintendent.

E. Use of School Textbooks and Library Books

A home schooling student may use school textbooks if the number of particular copies are sufficient, and library books owned by the school unit, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The use does not disrupt regular student, staff, or special program functions;
- 2) The student's sign-out period for a library book is the same as that applicable to regularly enrolled students;
- 3) The student's sign-out period for a textbook is for a period not to exceed one school year; and
- 4) The parent/guardian and student agree to reimburse the school unit for lost, unreturned, or damaged library books and textbooks and for any consumable supplies used.

F. Use of School Facilities and Equipment

A home schooling student may use public school facilities and equipment, with the exception of MLTI laptops, on the same basis as regularly enrolled students if the following conditions are met:

- 1) The use does not disrupt regular school activities;
- 2) The use is approved by the school principal in accordance with established school policy;
- 3) The use does not create additional expense to the school unit;
- 4) The use is directly related to the student's academic program; and
- 5) The use of potentially hazardous areas, such as shops, laboratories, and gymnasiums, is supervised by a qualified employee of the school unit, approved and assigned by the Superintendent.

G. State Adopted Assessments

If a parent of a student in an equivalent instruction program requests to have the student participate in any assessments adopted by the State of Maine for all students enrolled in public schools, such request shall be granted. Participation in such examinations must be in compliance with all rules and procedures governing testing conditions in RSU 13.

H. Academic Credit

A home schooling student will receive academic credit subject to the following requirements:

- 1) Academic credit for individual courses will be awarded if the student meets required academic standards applicable to all students enrolled in the same course; and

- 2) Academic credit will be awarded for successful completion of alternative instruction opportunities sponsored by the school and available to all students.

I. High School Course Credits and Diploma Eligibility

The following standards govern the awarding of course credits and a high school diploma to a home-schooled student who seeks admission or readmission to the high school:

- 1) A home schooling student will earn high school credits for satisfactory completion of courses in the high school pursuant to 20-A MRSA § 5021(2)(A);
- 2) A home schooling student will earn credit for course work completed through home-school instruction if the principal determines, both in advance and upon completion of the course, that the course satisfies the requirements for awarding the credit. The principal may direct that the student undergo a test or tests to assist in making a determination relative to the awarding of credit;
- 3) Requests for transfer credit for equivalent instruction completed at non-approved private schools, at private schools that elect not to meet requirements under 20-A MRSA § 2901, or through other equivalent instruction programs must be evaluated on the merits of the documentation provided. The principal and guidance staff shall conduct these evaluations on request made by the student or the parent. The principal may direct that the student undergo a test or tests to assist in making a determination relative to the awarding of credit;
- 4) For students who transfer into a secondary school from another state or an educational program that is not required to meet the standards of the system of Learning Results, the principal of the receiving school shall determine the value of the prior educational experience toward meeting the standards through the local assessment system; and
- 5) Awarding of a high school diploma is conditioned upon the student's demonstration of having satisfied all specific course credit and other requirements established by the RSU 13 Board. The Board may also establish resident credit requirements as a precondition for the awarding of a local school unit diploma.

J. Participation in Supplemental Activities

Home schooling students may participate in activities such as field trips, assemblies, and academically-related fairs provided:

- 1) Prior written permission is obtained from both the parent and the principal; and
- 2) The student has agreed to meet established behavioral, disciplinary, attendance, and other rules applicable to all students.

K. Participation in Cocurricular Activities

Home schooling students are eligible to try out for cocurricular activities (athletics and student activities) sponsored by RSU 13, provided the student applies in writing to the Principal and the Principal gives prior approval based on ~~and~~ the following requirements ~~are~~ being satisfied:

- 1) The student agrees to abide by equivalent rules of participation as are applicable to regularly enrolled students participating in the activity and provides evidence that the rules of participation are being met;
- 2) The student complies with the same physical examination, immunization, insurance, age, and semester eligibility requirements as regularly enrolled students participating in the activity.

All required documentation must be made available upon request by the school unit. The principal is authorized to collect from the parent actual samples of coursework (e.g., homework, examinations) as the principal deems necessary in order to make the determination that the necessary academic standards have been met;

- 3) The student meets equivalent academic standards as those established for regularly enrolled students participating in the activity and provides evidence that the academic standards are being met; and
- 4) The student abides by the same transportation policy as regularly enrolled students participating in the same activity.

L. Appeals

Appeals arising from the administration and application of this policy are heard by the Board, whose decision is final. Appeals that question whether the policy is in compliance with legal requirements must be made to the Commissioner.

Legal References: 20-A MRS § 5001-A
 Ch. 125 § 12.02, Ch. 130 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)

Approved: 2/2/12