

Departmental Directive Home Schooling

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Home Schooling Directive

Education Act and Regulations:

The new Education Act was passed in June of 1995, and came into force July 1, 1996. It recognizes home schooling as one of the ways in which parents may choose to access the education program for their children. The other choices a parent may make are a public school, or, where they exist, a public denominational school or a private school. The Home Schooling Regulations detail the responsibilities of parents, principals, designates of the Superintendent, the Superintendent, and the District Education Authority in relation to Home Schooling.

Rationale for this Directive:

As mentioned in the regulations, parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children in a home schooling program. The purpose of the registration and monitoring of students by the principal or Superintendent's designate is twofold. First, it allows the provision of support to the home schooling program. Second, it ensures that the home schooled student has access to an education program, as required by section 5 of the Education Act.

It is not the responsibility of the principal or Superintendent's designate to ensure that the home schooling program meets curriculum standards, or to evaluate the way the home schooling program is carried out. The responsibility of the principal or Superintendent's designate is to ensure the student is making progress in the program, and support the home schooling program wherever possible, as agreed upon with the parent.

In addition to the information contained in the Home Schooling Regulations, this directive provides direction with regard to funding, and provision of support to home schoolers. District Education Authorities and Divisional Educational Councils may also wish to develop policies providing more detailed guidelines for home schooling support services and reimbursement of program costs.

Support

Support to a home schooling program will depend upon what support the parent requests. For example, it might involve access to the school facilities, use of materials or resources, or assistance with assessment. Such requests should be accommodated by the principal or Superintendent's designate to whatever extent is possible, given the needs of the other students in the school. For instance, access to school facilities such as the gymnasium, library, computer room and science labs might be accommodated after school hours.

Duties of Superintendent's Designate and Principal

The Home Schooling Regulations list various duties that a principal has toward a home schooling program. Some divisions may decide that they wish to have one person in the division designated to perform these duties with regard to home schooling programs in the division. Subsection 4(5) of the Home Schooling Regulations allows the Superintendent to designate a person other than the principal to perform all of the duties and powers of the principal listed in section 4 of the Regulations, with the exception of providing access to school facilities and support to parents providing home schooling. These duties still rest with the principal.

The monitoring, assessment and reporting duties can be undertaken by the designate or the principal. The regulations require the principal (or designate) to agree with the parent on a form of assessment that is consistent with the home schooling program the parent has chosen. So, for instance, the parent may wish to keep a portfolio of work completed by the student for the purpose of assessment. Alternatively, the parent may wish to present tests completed by the student. Again, the parent may wish some combination of these, or may wish to include some observation of the student during work by the principal or designate. Any form of assessment that will show the student's progress in the education program, and that is agreed upon by the principal or designate and the parent is acceptable.

If in the principal's opinion the student is not making adequate progress, or if at any time the parent asks for assistance in altering the program, the principal or designate can make suggestions for change that would improve the program, or assist the student's progress.

If after making attempts to change the program and assist the home schooling parent, the principal or designate is still concerned that the student is not making

reasonable progress in the home schooling program, the principal or designate should report these concerns to the Superintendent and ask for an investigation of the home schooling program.

Superintendent's Duties

The regulations state the Superintendent's duties, which include reviewing the reports and recommendations provided by a principal or Superintendent's designate. Where the principal or designate recommends termination of a home schooling program, the Superintendent will investigate the recommendation by interviewing the parents providing the program, and by reviewing the relevant material. The Superintendent will then recommend in writing to the District Education Authority, the principal (or designate) and the parent, whether the home schooling program should continue, continue with suggested changes, or be terminated.

District Education Authority's Decisions and the Right of Appeal

Once a Superintendent has made a recommendation to a District Education Authority regarding a home schooling program, the District Education Authority must make a decision whether the home schooling program should continue, continue with changes, or be terminated. If the home schooling program is terminated, the District Education Authority must ensure the student has access to the education program, usually through attendance at school.

The parent of the home schooled student may appeal a decision of the District Education Authority to alter or terminate the home schooling program. The Education Appeal Regulations would apply to such an appeal.

Registration and Funding

As noted in the regulations, home schooled students are to be registered with a school in the district in which they are living. These students should be noted as home schooled students on a central school register, and attendance should not be kept for them. (Please note attendance for part time students identified below.) Principals, District Education Authorities, and Divisional Education Councils should include all home schooled students, identified as such, on all attendance information submitted to the Department. A home schooled student will be counted as 0.5 (50%) of a full time equivalent student (FTE) for the purposes of funding. One half of this amount (25% of an FTE) should be reserved to reimburse the parent's program costs.

Reimbursement of Program Costs

The Home Schooling Regulations state that a District Education Authority shall, in accordance with the directions of the Minister, provide funding to a parent for program costs related to the delivery of home schooling.

Parents should provide receipts to the District Education Authority for program costs, such as course costs, materials, curriculum costs, and so on. Items such as salary or capital expenditures (house renovations, computer hardware, etc.) are not considered program costs. The Divisional Education Council, at the direction of the District Education Authority, or the District Education Authority if they hold the funds, will reimburse the parent up to 25% of the full time equivalent amount that they receive for educating a student in their jurisdiction, for receipted program costs.

If they wish, the District Education Authority may make particular payment arrangements. For instance, they may want to reimburse the parents in two payments, one in the fall term and one in the spring. In this way, if the student returns to attending the school program part way through the year, some of the funding will still remain available to the school.

Part-Time Students

If a home schooling parent wishes to have their child attend school part time, and if the principal is in agreement, the principal may allow the student to do so. The home schooled student has no entitlement to attend school part time, however, this is up to the principal to decide, considering the needs of all the students in the school.

In the case of students who attend school on a part time basis, the student should be noted on the central school register as a part time student if they attend more than 50% of the time at school. If the student attends 50% or less of the time at school, the student should be registered as a home schooled student. In either case, the student should also be registered with a particular class, and attendance should be kept for them for the portion of the day they are attending the school.

Home schooled students will be counted as 0.5 (50%) of a full time equivalent student if they are attending less than half time at the school, and part time students will be counted as a full time equivalent student if they are attending half time or more at the school. The percentage of time should be counted on the basis of the percentage of instructional hours the student is to attend per week.

The District Education Authority can by policy decide how much (to a maximum of 25%) of the full time equivalent amount for students who attend some programs at the school will be available to reimburse the parent's program costs. The District Education Authority may wish to establish a policy that prorates the amount according to the amount of time the student is still receiving instruction at home.