

SAUGUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Policy on Home Schooling

The Saugus Public Schools recognize that parents have the right to educate their children at home. The school department also understands its role in working cooperatively with families that seek to home school. To insure a process that is fair and equitable to all involved, the following policy will govern home schooling requests and programs.

Under Massachusetts's law, parents who wish to educate their child at home as an alternative to public school enrollment must have their home education plan reviewed and approved by the school district in which their child resides. G.L. c76, section 1. The standard for approval of a home education plan is set out in the decision rendered by the Supreme Judicial Court in the case of *Care and Protection of Charles*, 399 Mass. 327 (1987). It states that the school district has a duty to ensure that a home-educated student receives instruction that is equal to public schooling in its thoroughness and efficiency, and in the progress made therein. In applying this standard school districts may only subject home education plans to requirements that are reasonable and essential to the state's interest in ensuring that all children receive an education. The extent to which a school district may consider certain factors in evaluating a home education plan has been considered in the creation of this policy.

Parents wishing to home school their children in any grade between grades one and twelve inclusive, must apply to the Office of the Superintendent. The Superintendent will schedule a meeting with the parents. At that time the family should provide the Superintendent with a home schooling plan. The Superintendent shall have the right to approve or disapprove the plan. If the plan is rejected, the Superintendent shall indicate where the plan is lacking, and the parents shall have the opportunity to address these issues. If, after changes have been made, the plan is still unacceptable, the parents have the right to a formal hearing with the Superintendent to explain the plan and address concerns. Parents may be represented by counsel at this meeting.

If the Superintendent chooses not to approve the plan, the parents have the right to appeal, within fourteen (14) business days, to the School Committee. The parents have the right to be represented by counsel at this meeting, and will be given one week advance notice of the time and place of such a hearing.

If the School Committee does not approve the plan, the family will be provided with a written statement of the reasons for the denial. This statement will be provided to the parents within ten (10) days of the denial.

The student must be enrolled or stay enrolled in the public schools until the plan is approved.

The following factors will be considered in evaluating the plan:

- The qualifications of the primary teacher of the children. While a teaching certificate is not required, some academic preparation is desirable. In the case of a student who is using a prepared curriculum from an accredited home schooling organization, the tutorial help available to the primary teacher will be considered.
- The course of study will be closely examined. Because it is the responsibility of the school department to make sure the home-schooled student is receiving an education comparable to what he/she would be getting in the public schools it is expected that the home schooling curriculum will closely follow the approved course of study.
- Textbooks and all other materials will be looked at.
- The evaluative methods used to determine a student's mastery of the subject will be given close scrutiny.

An approved home schooling plan will be reviewed annually. Student progress will be reviewed a minimum of twice during each year, in January and in June. Progress will be determined by looking at such things as standardized tests, portfolio work, progress reports, logs, journals, and such other work as might be required by other home schooling programs. More frequent reviews and standardized testing may be mandated at the discretion of the Superintendent.

Home-schooled students are not enrolled in the Saugus Public Schools, and have, in fact, expressly sought permission to withdraw from the public school program. Therefore, home-schooled students are not eligible to participate in extracurricular and athletic programs.

Home-schooled students will not be eligible for a Saugus High School diploma.

Adopted by School Committee: December 14, 2000