



# AHEM News

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc.

Volume 10 • No 1 • Fall 2012

**What  
you  
need  
to  
know  
when  
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need  
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it**

## Getting Started Homeschooling

**Monday, August 6, 2012**

7:00 – 9:00 PM

Whether you are actively considering home education or are just curious about how it is done, you are invited to attend Getting Started Homeschooling. The program will be held in the Jefferson Cutter House, Arlington, MA center on Monday, August 6, 7:00 – 9:00 pm.

Topics to be covered include an overview of homeschooling, deciding whether or not to homeschool, getting started, methods, resources, and homeschooling support. Informational handouts will be available and an opportunity for questions will follow the presentation.

The program will be presented by Sophia Sayigh, a founder of Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable educational organization that gathers and disseminates information about homeschooling in Massachusetts through education, advocacy, and events.

Cost is \$15/person to reserve your spot; the full price will be refunded to you at the meeting, making your participation FREE. If you don't show up, your money will be donated to support the non-profit mission of AHem.

If you want to go: Download the registration form found here: <http://www.ahem.info/Documents/GettingStartedRegistrationForm201208a.pdf> and return it to AHem, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474.

Space is limited and spots are allotted in the order registration forms are received; forms and checks must be postmarked by July 20th. No refunds after July 20th except those made to attendees at the workshop on August 6th. Those with email will receive confirmation about a week before the workshop, with detailed directions and parking.

After July 20, call 781-641-0566 or email [info@AHem.info](mailto:info@AHem.info) to check availability. Walk-ins will be accommodated on August 6, if space allows.

**IMPORTANT:** If you sign up for this event, please do your best to attend. Remember:

- When you sign up, you are reserving a spot that then cannot be given to someone else.
- If you sign up and do not show up, AHem reserves the right to no longer treat your reservation request on a first come, first served basis for future AHem events, only assigning you a spot should there be room after the deadline has been met.

## Current State Scene . . .

### Legislative Update

It has been a busy spring at our Massachusetts Legislature, which has moved on several education bills that AHem has been monitoring from the 187<sup>th</sup> Session (2011-2012). Below is an update of those bills most likely to have an impact on Massachusetts homeschoolers.

#### KINDERGARTEN REQUIREMENTS

**H 4031** – Rep. Alice H. Peisch, D. Wellesley, Chair of the Joint committee on Education; **AN ACT RELATIVE TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**. This bill is a redraft of H 1909, which had sought to establish mandatory and full-day kindergarten attendance. The new draft eliminates the full-day requirement but retains the age mandate with the following language, amending Section 1B of chapter 69 of the General Laws:

“The board shall promulgate regulations establishing the permissible and mandatory ages for school attendance provided that each child shall be required to attend an approved kindergarten program in a public or private setting or in a community-based program licensed by the department

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## Legislative

*continued from page 1*

of early education and care. Said regulations shall include mandatory attendance guidelines necessary for kindergarten completion. Said regulations shall include a process for school districts or Commonwealth charter schools to provide exemptions for advanced students to attend school beginning in first grade."

On April 11, 2012, this bill was reported favorably out of the Joint committee on Education and referred to the House committee on Ways and Means for a fiscal assessment.

AHEM contacted the Joint Education committee to express our concern that the language of H 4031 (as it amends Ch. 69) did not seem to account for "otherwise instructed" home-schoolers in Ch. 76. The aide said they were aware of us and "looked into" how homeschoolers would be considered in the bill and determined that *Charles* ultimately trumps/directs how the statute would be interpreted and that homeschoolers would fall under the "approved kindergarten program in a... private setting" language.

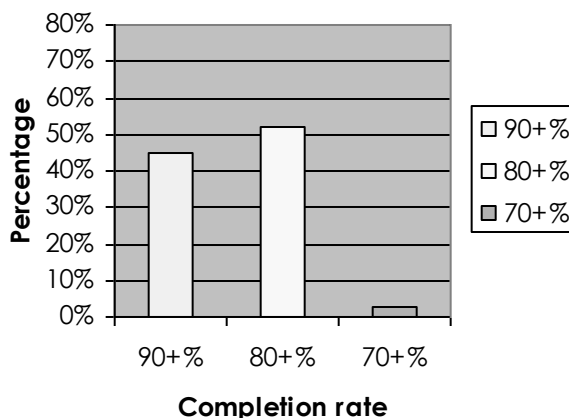
**H 1081**, Rep. Martha M. Walz, Democrat, Boston; AN ACT RELATIVE TO DETERMINING THE MANDATORY MINIMUM AGE FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE. This bill appears to go hand in hand with H 4031 (previously H 1909). It also amends MGL Ch. 69 Sec. 1B by further directing the Board of Education to "promulgate regulations setting a uniform calendar date each year for the purpose of determining the mandatory minimum age for school attendance..." The bill was referred to the Joint committee on Education on 2/16/11. A hearing was held on May 23, 2011. No further action has been taken.

## BILLS RAISING THE MANDATORY ATTENDANCE AGE

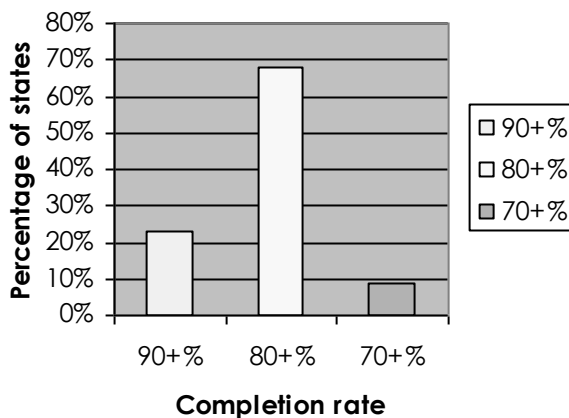
**S 2173** – Sponsored by the Joint committee on Education; AN ACT RELATIVE TO DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY. This bill is a compilation and redraft of previous S 185, H 142, and H 1906. It focuses primarily on aiding kids who are at risk of dropping out of high school prior to graduation. Additionally, however, the bill impacts all Massachusetts students by **raising the mandatory age for school attendance from 16 to 18**. The bill would take effect in two phases, raising the mandatory age to 17 in academic year 2013-14 and then to 18 in academic year 2014-15. On March 12, 2012, the bill was reported favorably out of the Education committee and is now with the Ways and Means committee for a cost analysis. In April, AHEM contacted a representative who had co-sponsored one of the prior bills, regarding opposition to S 2173. The Representative agreed that there is a lack of data connecting a higher age of compulsory school attendance with higher graduation rates and speculated that the Ways and Means Committee was unlikely to approve a bill that will necessarily have a local funding mandate that the state itself is not in a position to fund. AHEM plans to write a letter in opposition to the Ways and Means committee.

**H 3846**, Reps. Carlos Henriquez, D. Dorchester, Edward F. Coppinger, D. Boston; AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE COMPULSORY AGE OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE. This

### States with compulsory attendance age until 16



### States with compulsory attendance age over 16



bill seeks to increase the compulsory age of school attendance **in the city of Boston** by amending Section 1B, Ch. 69, "or section 1 of chapter 76, of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary regulating the compulsory age of school attendance, the compulsory maximum age for school attendance in Boston public and private schools shall be eighteen (18). Children under the age of 18, attending a Boston public or private school, shall remain enrolled until such time as they turn 18, or upon successful completion of all coursework required to graduate.

**SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect on July 1, 2012 and shall concern all students enrolled in Boston public and private schools for the 2012-13 school year and onward." The city of Boston has already provided local approval. H3846 was referred to the Jt. Committee on Education in 2011. A hearing was scheduled for April 10, 2012 and the reporting date has been extended to June 29, 2012. No further information was available as this newsletter goes to print.

**H 1964**, Rep. Martha M. Walz, Democrat, Boston, and others; AN ACT RELATIVE TO DROPOUT

PREVENTION H 1964 also amends MGL Ch. 69 Sec. 1B by changing the mandatory high school attendance age from 16 to 18. It further amends MGL Ch. 76 with the “age 18” requirement and directs the school Superintendent to notify the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) if a person between the ages of 16 and 18 withdraws from school. The RMV may then revoke that person’s driver’s license, except in certain extenuating circumstances. This bill was referred to the Joint committee on Education on 2/25/11. On September 27, 2011 the Joint committee held a hearing on the bill but no further action has yet been reported.

**H 3674**, Rep. Marcus A. Devers, Democrat, Lawrence; **AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MAXIMUM AGE FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN THE CITY OF LAWRENCE.** This bill would allow the City of Lawrence, MA to establish its own maximum age for school attendance, “which shall be 18 years of age, or upon the completion of a high school diploma,” notwithstanding the mandatory maximum age otherwise established by the state board of education. This bill was referred to the Joint committee on Education on 9/1/11. No further action has been taken. In April 2012, the House and Senate agreed to extend the reporting date for H 3674 to June 29, 2012. No further information was available as this newsletter goes to print.

### **DRIVERS LICENSE REQUIREMENTS**

**S 1743**, Rep. John A. Hart, Democrat, Boston; **AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE DENIAL OF DRIVER’S LICENSES FOR TRUANTS** This bill amends MGL Ch. 90 by adding a section requiring that an application for a driver’s license or learner’s permit be signed by a parent or guardian and be accompanied by certification from the school district that the applicant is enrolled in high school or, among other possibilities, “a home education program that satisfies the requirements of all state laws governing such courses...” This bill would seem to require homeschoolers to present an approval letter or other certification from the school district that they are engaged in an approved homeschooling plan prior to obtaining a driver’s license. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Transportation on 1/24/11. AHM has filed an opposition letter which will be included in the hearing testimony. The hearing was scheduled for March 12, 2012 but the bill has received no further action.

### **MCAS FOR NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**H 3582**, Rep. Alice Hanlon Peisch, Democrat, Wellesley; **AN ACT RELATIVE TO NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT ACCESS TO THE MCAS EXAM.** H 3582 requires the Department of Education to “issue a report on the feasibility and costs associated with non-public school students and home schooled students in grade 10 voluntarily taking the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam.” The report was due 12/31/11. While it is unfortunate that the term “home schooled” was added to the original wording of this bill (see H 1933), this bill only orders a feasibility report, so it doesn’t enter the term “home schooled” into the General Laws. This bill was reported favorably by the Education Committee and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means on 7/13/2011. No further action has been taken.

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## **Not-Back-to-School**

### **AHEM Getting Started Homeschooling Brochures**

Remember when you were considering homeschooling but you weren’t sure where to find information about it?

AHEM’s *Getting Started Homeschooling* brochure cuts to the chase with information on deciding to homeschool and getting started homeschooling in Massachusetts.

**We’d love your help in getting more of them into the hands of people who need them:** young families wondering about the homeschool option; parents of kids who are suffering in school and aren’t sure where to turn; librarians who often get questions about homeschooling.

There are lots of helpful and effective ways to distribute the brochure:

- Leave a few at your public library with the Reference or Children’s Librarian.
- Hand some out at informal gatherings like park days and support meetings.
- Have some available at homeschool information nights.
- Keep a few to mail to individuals who contact you looking for more information.
- Stash some in a glove compartment or backpack so that they’re on hand when you need them.
- Leave a couple or post one anywhere that it’s OK to leave free literature or post informational notices.

AHEM would be happy to provide you with copies of the brochure. Just email [info@ahem.info](mailto:info@ahem.info) with name, address, and number of pamphlets desired, or leave a message at 781-641-0566 with name, address, phone number and number of pamphlets desired, and we’ll get them right out to you. Thanks for your help!

### **Not-Back-to-School Event listing**

A treat that we homeschoolers experience during the “Back-to-School” season is the feeling of heading off to a beach or park on a glorious September day when the rest of the world has settled back into closeting themselves indoors at school again. If your homeschool support group hosts a “Not-Back-to-School” event at which you’d welcome newcomers, we invite you to send details about it to list on our special page of such events.

It is fun and inspirational to see the myriad of events that take place across Massachusetts at this time of year, from Cape Cod homeschoolers heading to the beach to Western Mass. homeschoolers atop of mountains, (or go ahead – break the stereotype!) and everything in between. We hope you will send us your listing.

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## **Why and How to Get Connected**

In this day and age, homeschoolers represent a market. There are many businesses catering to homeschoolers’ needs – or perceived needs. When first starting out it can be especially tempting to sign up for a multitude of classes or experiences that are being sold to you, rather than putting your energy into a grassroots network such as a local homeschool support group. Before you know it, your days are filled with activity and

you don't look back.

The intangibles you'd be missing out on – real connection with other homeschoolers and personal empowerment – might be some of the best kept secrets of homeschooling, as well as what would sustain you on this path in the end. It's worth putting some time and effort in, and yes, if shy, getting your courage up, to figure out how to insinuate yourself into a group of homeschoolers, rather than falling for prepackaged deals that leave you with a busy day void of meaningful relationships, and a depleted wallet.

### **Steps to take in building connection with other homeschoolers:**

- Acts create connection: give of yourself.
- Make spending time with other adults a priority; schedule it in.
- Be patient. Connections are built one relationship at a time.

### **How support groups work**

Support groups range in their level of organization, from loose groups of people who get together from time to time, to highly organized groups with missions and boards. Some are inclusive and welcome everyone; others cater to a certain educational philosophy or religion. It is fine to try out a few and see where you feel comfortable, or to start your own. Homeschooling support groups can act as frameworks for networking, communication and support. It is important to realize that subscribing to a newsletter or email list does not magically make you part of some deeper pre-existing community. Ready-made communities don't exist; they are an illusion. You must put time and effort in to forge friendships. You get from the experience what you put into it.

Group activities, such as field trips, get-togethers, or classes, often depend on the unique energies and interests individuals bring to the group. Events and activities can be planned by individuals, or in collaboration with others. It is empowering to realize that you, children included, can create the opportunities and experiences you want for yourselves.

When attending a meeting or event, be sure to introduce yourself as a homeschooler. A good way to meet people is to extend yourself: organize a field trip or other event, edit a newsletter, host a support meeting.

### **Examples of rituals and social events you can organize:**

- Camping trips
- History and science fairs
- Monthly support meetings
- Meetups at ponds, parks, playground hopping
- Indoor gym play and skating
- Potluck suppers
- Book, game and puzzle swaps
- Talent shows
- Field trips

### **Swapping expertise**

Another level of interaction is the swapping of expertise and interest between homeschooling parents and others' children. People have been known to organize homeschooler-led groups

in literature, writing, including historical fiction and child-published newspapers, history, classic films, math, Math Counts, Destination Imagination, art, knitting/sewing clubs, pet clubs, singing, storytelling, theatre groups, and more. Some people charge a nominal fee for leading a class. Others feel that as they give, so will they receive, and gladly put their energies into the "pot." In addition to the obvious "educational" benefits of all these interactions, whole families get to know one another, lives intersect, and interdependence develops.



## **Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers . . .**

### **Transitioning a Family from School to Home Education: Tips from the Rearview Mirror**

*By Gina Beth Basteri*

When I made the decision to remove my daughter from public school, I delved into research mode. Learning all that I could about curricula, educational philosophies, "socialization," standard courses of studies, how to get into college without a diploma, and anything else that came to mind. While there are many articles out there that go over the "hows" of taking a child out of school and where to begin home educating, I had a very hard time finding any that went much beyond the standard "be sure to allow the child to deschool." And many were written by people who have never actually gone through the process themselves. I am not an expert, but hindsight is priceless. It is my hope that you will find these inside tips helpful to you, as you begin your Home Ed journey.

### **Decompressing vs. Deschooling**

While deschooling of the child is very important, deschooling the parents should really be the first step in the process. When you are raised to believe that only accredited teachers can help someone learn, you have to build yourself up and realize that no one is more qualified than you are to teach your child. Parents need to break away from the thoughts of what "school" looks like and begin to realize that "education" and "schooling" are not one and the same and often, detrimental to the other. Most sources will advise that one month of deschooling is needed for each year a child has been in a school system, however for the parents I would, at the very least, double that amount of time.

I like to think of this process more as a decompressing of the learner within – the learner that generally gets squashed away

in order to conform and fit in within classroom settings. Both the parent and child need to be allowed freedom to discover what being educated means to them. What is truly important for your child to know? This is a question that only the parents and the child can answer. Often the answer is very different from one family to another and even from one child to the next within the same family. Children who have been schooled need the chance to remember that learning is fun and begin to enjoy learning again. When you take away rote memorization drills and allow a child to explore what they find interesting, or what is needed to solve a real problem, they rediscover the curiosity and enthusiasm that is frequently suppressed by a system that needs everyone to remember the same information in order to pass the test.

A common misconception that the word deschooling brings to mind is that the child is allowed to just “do nothing” which can make a lot of parents uncomfortable. It is better to think of this time as allowing the family to discover how they learn, what their interests are and what they want their lives to be like. Children should be allowed freedom to discover what interests them and how they best absorb information. Parents can encourage this discovery by providing a multitude of resources, from traditional workbooks, to field trips, to television series, to co-op classes and anything else that might pique their interest in a subject. Learning styles can vary greatly and often a child will enjoy math through hands-on manipulation of blocks, but enjoy reading a great historical fiction series to learn about the Revolutionary War. This time will allow you and your learner a chance to see what fits.

It should also be a time when the child’s circadian rhythms are allowed to return to a natural state. Often children who are used to being told what to do with every second of the day, have no idea when they are hungry, thirsty, tired or even need to go to the bathroom. They have become trained to sleep when told, eat when told, and hold “IT” for extended amounts of time when necessary. This causes circadian rhythms to become nearly dormant in a child’s body. When given the chance, these natural feelings will return and a child will have control of his or her body again, often leading to children who had discipline and attention issues becoming far more content and attentive. This is a factor that is very often overlooked by behaviorists within a school environment, but has been noted time and again from parents who have removed their children from the system.

### **Swiss Cheese Knowledge Base**

The most frequent question I see on home education forums from parents who are thinking of taking this step is some variation of “What curriculum should I use?” For the person asking, this seems like such a simple question. Surely, my fourth grader in Wyoming should be learning the exact same information as the fourth grader in Dakota. This could not be further from the truth. Not only do different states teach different things at different ages, different counties and even different schools within the same town teach things differently. No matter what standard base is being used, not all fourth graders in any system are going to learn the same information. For most home educators this is even more of a widespread question because they tend to realize the individual needs of each child and therefore can’t tell you what curriculum to use

without having any idea what type of child would be using it. When you take a child out of a system where one set of principles or standards is being taught, it is not possible to pick up a catalog and order the fourth grade school in a box set because you have no idea if that system is going to be aligned with the previous one.

Another thing that is often not discussed in regard to where to begin is the concept of a “Swiss cheese knowledge base.” Children who have been in schools have often been taught a lot of information in a very disconnected manner because the focus of so many schools is to teach to the test – CAT, FCAT, MCAS, SAT, ACT or whatever acronym your state has chosen to best “measure” output. This causes many children to have blocks of information scattered with all kinds of holes where the information is missing or has not been connected to anything to make it permanent in the child’s memory. In order to truly learn something it must be digested and connected with a real world application or situation. This is why so many children learn from movies, activities and games – they are using multiple senses and therefore can more easily retain the information. I highly recommend approaching each topic as though the child has never encountered it before. This allows you to set the pace at which you move through things, skimming through content that seems to be coming easily to the child, focusing on areas of great interest for as long as the child wants, or slowing down and going deeper on something that needs more time to be fully understood.

### **What About Socialization?**

Inevitably the “S” word is always brought up during a transition from a school system to home learning. For families who have been traditionally educated it is hard to fathom how their children could possibly make friends or learn to be productive citizens when they spend every day at home with only their family to interact with. It may be hard for many parents to believe, but although they may not be as “socialized” as their public school counterparts, home educated children are generally more social and outgoing. “Socialization” is manufactured, living and learning is natural.

A very important thing to keep in mind is also this: kids feed off of the fears of their parents so it is important for the parents to assure their children that they are not the only ones on the planet that have made the choice to learn at home. Join online communities and local support groups to connect with other home educators in your area. You may need to put yourselves out there, even if it is outside of your comfort zone. By getting involved with a wide variety of classes, hangouts, park days, co-ops, field trips etc. you widen your chances of finding families with common interests and outlooks. It can be difficult at times for kids to feel connected so try not to feel discouraged if, after your first attempt, you don’t meet anyone that your child hits it off with. If you just keep trying you are likely to build friendships that are based more on common interests, than on what class you randomly got placed into. Many families find that their children develop bonds with people in the community – local shop keepers, librarians, museum workers – because the kids have a true and honest interest in obtaining knowledge from experienced adults, rather than textbooks.

## Just Live!

Once a family has their feet under them in this new world, they tend to come to the realization that learning and life go hand in hand. You will begin to see that kids absorb information when it is presented in a format that resonates within them. I have heard story upon story of parents being astounded at the wealth of knowledge that flows from their children's mouths, often on topics the parents themselves know nothing about. When given a chance to follow their own interests, children learn more quickly and deeply than is comprehensible by traditionally schooled parents. The greatest gift given to anyone is life and the chance to just live it!



## Back to Homeschool

By Milva McDonald

Soon it will be time to wave goodbye to summer.

It's the middle of August, and summer is winding down. September looms, and with it the beginning of the school year. Just what does "back to school" mean for homeschoolers? There isn't one answer to that question. All homeschooling families are different. And one of the great benefits of homeschooling is that we're not bound to academic calendars that rule the lives of families with kids in school.

That's how I envisioned it, anyway. It hasn't exactly worked out that way. My kids may not be heading to school every morning come September, but what we call our "year" will start. It's time to gear up for dance classes, orchestra, chorus, and writing group. It's time to decide whether we're going to add any of the other amazing offerings available to us – nature classes or math club. Or perhaps this year my daughter will take her first community college class. We'll see.

I'm not complaining. Even in this lifestyle centered around the "academic" year, we have lots of freedom to choose, room to explore, and flexibility in our lives and our learning. Besides, there doesn't seem to be a way around it. The groups and activities my kids want to be involved in abide by the school calendar. Summer is vacation time. That's just one of the rhythms of the world in which we live.

I can't help but think about that idyllic vision so many homeschoolers start with, though. The one where learning happens all the time, and life simply flows from one season to another without arbitrary cutoffs for what happens when.

When my kids were little, life was more like that. Days were spent at the library, museums, the park, the beach, sledding, or just at home playing – whatever was appropriate and felt right in the moment. Life was rich, filled with happiness, learning, and authenticity. There was no big gear up in August, no trying to figure out just what we're going to do this year to facilitate rewarding and satisfying lives for everyone.

These days, life is still full, but in a different way. Older kids develop interests and drives that need to be nurtured. We're still learning 365 days a year, but in order to participate in the social, academic, cultural, and artistic activities my kids choose, we inevitably fall into the conventional "back to school" pattern.

I guess that's not so bad, especially when all the things we're looking forward to beginning or resuming in September are fun and exciting. But sometimes homeschoolers get so drawn into mining available resources for opportunities that they forget that lazy summer days provide benefits no class or program can. It's the unscheduled moments that help our kids learn introspection and how to fill their own time. It's solitude that allows people to know themselves and recharge their batteries for interaction and participation in the larger world.

In the sometimes frantic "back to school" rush, we homeschoolers have the luxury of taking a deep breath, stepping back, and remembering some of the reasons we chose to homeschool in the first place. As September approaches and you need to decide how to commence your homeschooling year, let that sink in and guide your family's choices for a productive fall and beyond.

*Milva McDonald has been a homeschooling mom for 20 years. Her children are 27, 24, 15, and 13. During that time, she's been active in her local support group, led book groups, and facilitated writing groups for area homeschoolers. She is also a founding member of AHM. Milva enjoys reading, writing, singing, socializing, and the Red Sox. See more of her writing at [examiner.com](http://examiner.com):[http://](http://examiner.com)*

## Around AHM . . .

### The Logic Behind Our Legislative Alerts

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts (AHM) believes that informed and active homeschoolers are their own best advocates in maintaining the right to independently homeschool. One of our goals is to do our best to monitor legislation that has the potential to affect homeschoolers. We keep AHM Friends informed about pending legislation through periodic updates and alerts. As an organization, we communicate with legislators when appropriate.

While AHM sometimes takes a position on a piece of legislation, we do not assume that all homeschoolers will share this position. Our hope is that after being presented with the relevant information, homeschoolers will think through the

issues and come to their own conclusions about where they stand. We welcome any questions, concerns, or comments regarding any legislation.

When communicating information about pending legislation, we try to present the issues in a clear, concise manner so that those concerned will have the information they need to make an informed decision about their position on a particular bill. When feasible, we provide contact information for appropriate legislators in the updates and alerts so that Friends can make contact regarding their own personal opinions.

We know that at times it can seem overwhelming and somewhat tedious to read through legislative alerts and updates. We all have our families as our number one priority. But if we want to keep homeschooling freedoms for our children and grandchildren — should we be so lucky — it is essential that we take an active role in understanding legislative issues and let our elected officials know where we stand when those freedoms are threatened.

We have had discussions with several legislators about how to have an impact on the legislative process. Across the board, they agreed that the use of form letters is not an effective way to defeat bills. These legislators have said that when they receive form letters, they assume that the individual signing the letter is just a mouthpiece for an organization and the letter ends up in the circular file. Several legislators have used as an example of an effective campaign an effort by Massachusetts nurses to defeat a bill that would have negatively impacted their profession. The nurses wrote individual letters each giving his or her personal reasons why he or she did not want the bill to pass. One legislator told us that it was the most successful campaign he has ever seen, and that we can all learn from the way the nurses handled this particular bill. (If letter writing seems daunting, keep in mind that even a phone call to your representative stating your position, for or against, is better than nothing, and better than an AHM-generated form letter.)

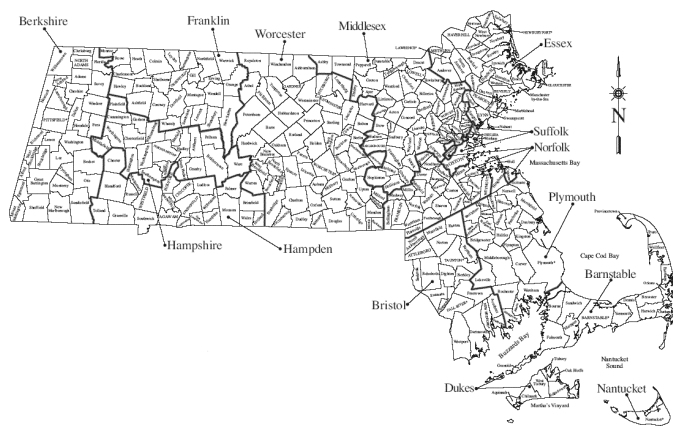
### **Ways you can take positive action right now**

Find out who your representatives are, add their emails to your address book and keep their phone numbers handy. Search using your street address: [www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php](http://www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php). Read *Taking Charge through Homeschooling* by Larry and Susan Kaseman, “to increase awareness of the political nature of everyday actions and of ways of becoming empowered through them.”<sup>1</sup> If you're inspired to go the extra mile, AHM welcomes volunteers to help monitor legislation (a great civics lesson combined with community service). Find out more at <http://www.ahem.info/Volunteer.html>.

<sup>1</sup> M. Larry and Susan D. Kaseman, *Taking Charge through Homeschooling: Personal and Political Empowerment* (Stoughton, WI: Koshkonong Press, 1990), p. 3.

## **Highlighting AHM County Contacts**

While we at Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts love people to make use of the wealth of information about homeschooling in Massachusetts from our web site, we also realize that sometimes there is no substitute for a live person to provide information and one-on-one support, to help with questions about the *Charles* guidelines, or to act as a sounding board for concerns in dealing with school officials. This is what AHM County Contacts are ready to do. AHM's resources allow County Contacts to have a broad overview and solid understanding of how homeschooling works in Massachusetts as well as an awareness of hot spots and trends.



### **County Contacts**

#### **Cape Cod & The Islands: Barnstable, Dukes & Nantucket Counties**

Sophia 781-641-0566

#### **Bristol & Essex Counties**

Stephanie 781-646-4541

#### **Middlesex County**

Cindy 774-249-0806

#### **Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk & Worcester Counties**

Milva 781-648-5579

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