

## National Issues . . .

### Important News for Homeschoolers with Special Needs: US DOE Clarifies IDEA Consent Override Procedures

The United States Department of Education has published new federal regulations for the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-2004). These final regulations took effect on October 13, 2006.

The United States Department of Education has added a new paragraph (§ 300.300(d)(4)) to their regulations “to provide that if a parent of a child who is home schooled or placed in a private school by the parent at the parent’s expense, does not provide consent for an initial evaluation or a reevaluation, or the parent fails to respond to a request to provide consent, the public agency (A) may not use the consent override procedures (described elsewhere in § 300.300), and (B) is not required to consider the child eligible for services under the requirements relating to parentally-placed private school children with disabilities (§§ 300.132 through 300.144).”<sup>1</sup>

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services provides the following discussion:

New § 300.300(e)(4) clarifies that parents who enroll their children in private elementary schools and secondary schools have the option of not participating in an LEA’s child find activities required under § 300.131. As noted in the *Analysis of Comments and Changes* section for subpart D, once parents opt out of the public schools, States and school districts do not have the same interest in requiring parents to agree to the evaluation of their children as they do for children enrolled in public schools, in light of the public agencies’ obligation to educate public school children with disabilities. We further indicate in the discussion

of subpart D that we have added new § 300.300(e)(4) (proposed § 300.300(d)) to clarify that if the parent of a child who is home schooled or placed in a private school by the child’s parent at the parent’s own expense does not provide consent for an initial evaluation or reevaluation, the public agency may not use the due process procedures in section 615 of the Act and the public agency is not required to consider the child for equitable services.<sup>2</sup>

The logic of this decision is further discussed in the *Analysis of Comments and Changes* section for subpart D, cited above:

There are compelling policy reasons why the Act’s consent override procedures should be limited to children who are enrolled, or who are seeking to enroll, in public school. Because the school district has an ongoing obligation to educate a public school child it suspects has a disability, it is reasonable for a school district to provide the parents with as much information as possible about their child’s educational needs in order to encourage them to agree to the provision of special education services to meet those needs, even though the parent is free, ultimately, to reject those services. The school district is accountable for the educational achievement of all of its children, regardless of whether parents refuse the provision of educationally appropriate services. In addition, children who do not receive appropriate educational services may develop behavioral problems that have a negative impact on the learning environment for other children.

By contrast, once parents opt out of the public school system, States and school districts do not have the same interest in requiring parents to agree to the evaluation of their children. In such cases, it would be overly intrusive for the school district to insist on an evaluation over a parent’s objection. The Act gives school districts no regulatory authority over private schools.

<sup>1</sup> United States. Department of Education, *Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children With Disabilities; Final Rule*. 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301, RIN 1820-AB57, Federal Register / Vol. 71, No. 156 / Monday, August 14, 2006 / Rules and Regulations, p. 46543. 9 Dec. 2006  
<<http://idea.ed.gov/download/finalregulations.pdf>>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 46592

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Moreover, the Act does not require school districts to provide FAPE to children who are home schooled or enrolled in private schools by their parents.<sup>3</sup>

### Massachusetts Special Education Law

The above federal regulation does not change Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71B, *Children with Special Needs*, that states that school age children with disabilities are entitled to publicly-funded special education services regardless of whether they are educated in a public or non-public school setting.

The Massachusetts Department of Education's *Administrative Advisory SPED 2006-3R: IDEA-2004 and Private School Students* clarifies:

Massachusetts' special education law requires school districts to offer special education and related services to all students who reside in the district, including private school students. These services must be designed to meet the needs of eligible students and must provide students with a genuine opportunity to participate in a public school special education program. The school district must provide or arrange for evaluation,

determine eligibility, propose an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and make services available to all eligible students who reside in the district, regardless of where they attend school.<sup>4</sup>

### Summary

In summary, eligible Massachusetts homeschoolers still have right to special services through the public schools if they desire them. But if a homeschool parent does not provide consent for an initial evaluation or a reevaluation, the school may not override that decision and is not required to consider the child eligible for services.

Further, since IDEA does not require school districts to provide FAPE to children who are homeschooled, presumably school districts will no longer need to worry about liability issues concerning their obligation to provide special services to homeschoolers who have waived their right to publicly-funded services. Hopefully this will make approval of homeschooling plans for special needs students a clearer and smoother process for all parties involved.

## Current State Issues . . .

### Legislative Update

We are now nearing the end of the current legislative session. Any bills that are not signed into law by the end of the year will be considered "dead."

#### HB 4738, "An Act Relative to Public School Attendance Requirements"

HB 4738, "An Act Relative to Public School Attendance Requirements" which combined several bills including HB 1044, "An Act Relative to Increasing Mandatory School Age," and HB 1202, "An Act Relative to Public School Attendance Requirements," would establish a Commission "for the purpose of investigating and reporting on current efforts to reduce student drop out rates in the Commonwealth, and to recommend additional programs or policies that could reduce the drop out rate in the Commonwealth. The Commission shall explore plans, programs, initiatives, curricula, policies, including those in other states, or any other source of information, which is relevant to reducing the drop out rate in the Commonwealth." The Commission would be made up of 15 members, including members

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts. Department of Education. *Administrative Advisory SPED 2006-3R: IDEA-2004 and Private School Students*. By Marcia Mittnacht, State Director of Special Education. 13 Sept.2005 (Revised 12 May 2006). 9 Dec. 2006, < [http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/06\\_3.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/06_3.html)>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 46635.

of the Joint committee on Education and the Joint committee on Children and Families. The Commission would hold four public hearings in diverse locations, would take testimony from the public, and would submit their report to the full Joint committee on Education on July 1, 2007.

On March 6, 2006, HB 4738 received a unanimous "ought to pass" vote by the Education committee. On March 8, 2006, the bill moved to the Joint Rules committee. On March 13, 2006, HB 4738 was moved to the House Rules committee. On June 8, 2006, the House Committee recommended the bill "ought to pass" and referred the bill to the Committee on House Ways and Means. If this bill doesn't move by the end of the year, it will be considered "dead."

Here is the link for HB 4738 on the General Court website:

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/184history/h04738.htm>

Here is the link to the text of HB 4738:

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/ht04pdf/ht04738.pdf>

#### **HB 1220, "An Act Relative to Homeschooling"**

AHEM has also been following HB 1220, a bill that would allow homeschoolers to take the MCAS at taxpayers' expense, and would require school districts to grant diplomas to homeschoolers that pass the MCAS and request a diploma. This bill has become part of a study order, HB 4822, and has been with a study committee since April 2006. If the bill doesn't move from that committee by December 31, 2006, it will be considered "dead."

You can read more about this bill at

<http://www.ahem.info/HB1220.htm>.

#### **SB 1907, "An Act Providing for the Denial of Driver's Licenses to Truants," and SB 2125, "An Act Relative to Eligibility for a License to Operate a Motor Vehicle"**

SB 1907, "An Act Providing for the Denial of Driver's Licenses to Truants," and SB 2125, "An Act Relative to Eligibility for a License to Operate a Motor Vehicle," have been combined and are now included in SB 2417. This new bill authorizes the joint committee on Transportation to make an investigation and study of certain current Senate documents relative to transportation. The Transportation committee reported favorably on this bill and the bill has been with the Senate Ethics and Rule committee since March 2006. If this bill doesn't move by the end of the year, it will be considered "dead."

Information about both these bills can be found at

<http://www.ahem.info/SB1907.htm> and

<http://www.ahem.info/SB2125.htm>.

Bills for the new legislative session are currently being filed. AHEM will keep an eye on new bills and keep you posted as to any bills that have the potential to impact homeschooling in the state.

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## **Summary of Data from Homeschool Policy and Practice Database**

Here are collated responses to Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts's questionnaire about homeschool policy and practice in Massachusetts. For over three years, AHEM has been collecting information from homeschoolers about official town policy (including the policies themselves), and about how homeschooling actually works in towns in Massachusetts, according to homeschoolers. So far we have received 200 responses. The majority of respondents are people who receive regular AHEM updates either via email or US mail, although some respondents received the questionnaire as a forwarded email and others found it on our website. The results draw an interesting picture of the way homeschooling works in general (pretty smoothly) and homeschoolers' personal experiences of dealing with school officials (overall, no major problems).

### **How much in advance of the school year do school officials ask that you submit homeschooling plans?**

#### **What do you do? Please explain.**

Most schools request that plans be filed before beginning to homeschool, or before the beginning of the school year. Some mention a specific amount of time prior, ranging from one week to three months before school starts. Most homeschoolers submit a plan over the summer, the majority in August. There were no reports of problems if a plan was filed later than requested.

**"School policies that exceed Charles and Brunelle do not have to be adhered to by home-schoolers."**

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### **Do school officials ask to meet with homeschoolers? Do you comply? Please explain.**

Sixty-five percent of respondents report that school officials do not ask for face-to-face meetings. Twelve percent report that school officials asked for an initial meeting with homeschoolers when they filed their first

plan; eighty-six percent of these agreed to a one-time meeting when first starting homeschooling. Twenty-three percent of homeschoolers are asked to meet annually with school officials. Of these, fifty-nine percent choose to comply, forty-one percent do not. While it sometimes took some negotiating to decline a meeting, homeschoolers who chose not to meet with school officials were ultimately approved.

**Do school officials ask to visit your home? Do you comply? Please explain.**

Ninety-six percent of respondents do not have school officials ask to visit their homes. There were no negative consequences for not agreeing to a home visit. Indeed, the 1998 *Brunelle* Supreme Court decision made it clear that home visits cannot be required as a condition of approval.

**Do school officials ask for a daily schedule? For number of hours on each subject? Do you comply? Please explain.**

Fifty-six percent of respondents are not asked for a schedule or number of hours. Sixteen percent are asked to state that they will meet or exceed the 900/990 hours of instruction required in the public schools. Twenty-eight percent of respondents are asked to supply a schedule or number of hours per subject.

Of those asked to supply a schedule, thirty-five percent comply, and sixty-three percent do not. Some of these sixty-three percent state instead that they will meet or exceed the 900/990 hours of instruction in the public schools, and that that seems to be acceptable. There were no negative consequences for those who chose to give the broader answer rather than a grid type schedule.

**What form of assessment do you provide and how many times a year?**

- Fifty-nine percent of respondents write a progress report. About 14% of the people who write progress reports indicate that the schools expect them to also submit work samples (a report combined with work samples is commonly referred to as a portfolio). Please note that *Charles* requires homeschoolers to submit only one form of evaluation. A report alone should suffice, or work samples without any written narrative, should suffice. While a portfolio is nice to have as a record for your own use, there is no need to give that much information to school officials.
- Fourteen percent of respondents choose to test. Tests used include the California Achievement Test (CAT), the Personalized Achievement Summary System Test (PASS), the Wide Range Assessment test (WRAT), the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills

(CTBS), the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and the Stanford Test.

- Ten percent of respondents submit work samples.
- Ten percent of respondents submit no evaluation at all.
- Five percent of respondents indicated their evaluation method varies; parents choose from year to year.
- Two percent of respondents indicated use of a form of evaluation other than testing, progress reports, or work samples.

Eighty-two percent of homeschoolers who indicated frequency submit evaluation once a year, fifteen percent submit twice a year, four percent submit four times a year.

**Do school officials provide you with a letter of approval?**

Seventy-five percent of respondents receive an approval letter. Twenty-five percent do not receive a letter of approval.

**Do school officials allow homeschoolers to participate in school activities? Please be specific.**

Eighty-four percent of respondents report that their school allows them to participate in either classes, sports, extracurricular activities, or some combination of these. Sixteen percent report that their school does not allow them to participate in school functions at all.

Where some participation is allowed, the activities break down as follows:

- 6% are allowed to borrow books
- 26% are allowed to play sports
- 16% are allowed to take classes
- 32% are allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities
- 20% are allowed to join chorus or band

**“On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very easy to deal with and 5 being very difficult, how would you rate your town's treatment of homeschoolers?”**

Seventy-six percent of respondents reported their town to be easy or very easy to deal with, 18% reported their town to be average, 6% reported their town to be difficult, and less than one percent of respondents considered their town to be very difficult to deal with. Some towns that homeschoolers rate as friendly include New Bedford, Waltham and Woburn.

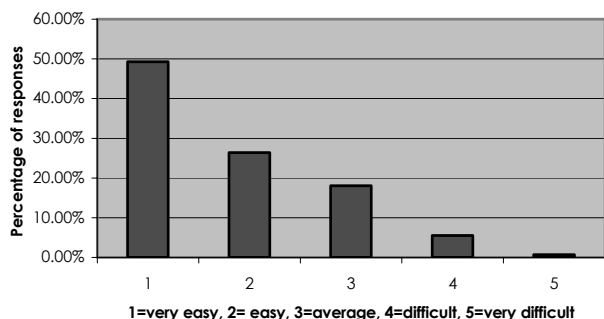
In summary, things continue to go pretty smoothly for homeschoolers here in Massachusetts. Most homeschoolers report no difficulties in dealing with school officials. In cases where school officials ask for more than *Charles* allows, we see over and over again

that homeschoolers who are aware of their rights simply submit what *Charles* allows, and there are no negative repercussions for standing up for oneself in this way. Furthermore, standing up for your rights in this way strengthens the ability of other homeschoolers to do the same, and lessens the likelihood that school officials' demands will escalate. We can't say it enough: School policies that exceed *Charles* and *Brunelle* do not have to be adhered to by homeschoolers. See *Tips for Writing your Education Plan*

<http://www.ahem.info/TipsforWritingYourEdPlan.htm> for ways to satisfy the requirements of *Charles* without going into needless detail. Questions? Call AHM. <http://www.ahem.info/CountyContacts.htm>

This is an ongoing project: We hope you will help us build the database further as the more responses we get, the clearer the picture of homeschooling in Massachusetts becomes. The more questionnaire responses we receive, the easier it is for us to pinpoint hotspots or identify trends. Please take a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire, which you can find at <http://www.ahem.info/index.htm>.

**Homeschoolers perception of how easy or difficult it is to homeschool in their town**



## Homeschool Policies in Massachusetts: An Overview

AHEM offers this clarification of the role of homeschool policies in towns in Massachusetts. While unsatisfactory policies can occasionally create nuisances for homeschoolers, they are not a huge problem in Massachusetts. Under our current law, the only policy that counts is *Charles*. While homeschoolers within their own towns can have good experiences working with school officials, build bridges, develop positive relationships, and educate school officials about *Charles* and homeschooling in general, a policy that exceeds *Charles* is not in and of itself a threat to homeschooling

freedoms, and does not automatically signify an unreasonable superintendent.

### Policies Are Only Administrative Tools, Not Law

No school district is required to have a homeschooling policy. Policies are not legal documents, only administrative tools superintendents and school committees devise to ease their task of homeschool oversight. School districts can write whatever policies they like as an administrative tool, but if their guidelines exceed those of *Charles* and *Brunelle*, then the policy is not legal.

While there are some inflexible and unreasonable superintendents out there, in most cases they are just people who are trying to do their jobs. Communicating with them in reasonable, non-contentious ways serves homeschoolers who are trying to negotiate on policy points. One thing homeschoolers struggling with their town's policy can do is to remind superintendents that they are not shirking their oversight responsibilities if they choose not to create a policy.

### Origin of Homeschool Policies

In the process of compiling our policy and practice database, it has come to the attention of AHM that many school districts in Massachusetts recycle homeschool policies from other towns. Some may be extracting homeschooling policies from a national policy database maintained by the National School Board Association (NSBA). The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) has recently started publicly posting school policies on its web site [[http://www.masc.org/con02\\_nomframe.asp](http://www.masc.org/con02_nomframe.asp)]. The parts to do with homeschooling are in sections IHBG and LBC. Our research so far shows that at least some of the policies in both the NSBA and MASC databases contain extralegal requirements.

If your town is adopting a "new" policy you might check with us to see if it is a policy already in use somewhere in Massachusetts. It's safe to assume that a school adopting such a policy is not going over it with a fine-toothed comb, but rather choosing to lighten its workload by not reinventing the wheel and using something already in existence.

### Pros and cons of working with school officials to revise written homeschool policy

Based on data from AHM's policy and practice database, it is common for policies in Massachusetts to exceed *Charles* in one aspect or another. In practice, homeschoolers generally do not follow the policy points that are objectionable, and their plans are approved with no problems. (See "Summary of Data from Homeschool

Policy and Practice Database,” page 3.) There have been cases, however, where homeschoolers have chosen to work with their superintendents or school committees to bring their town policy in line with *Charles* and *Brunelle*. Given that homeschool policies are legally meaningless in Massachusetts, what might be the reasons for spending long hours in negotiation with school committees and superintendents over points that don't need to be followed anyway?

One reason might be that working in a group on an abstract analysis of the issues can feel less threatening than doing it as an individual family, if it appears that the school is actually going to follow through and not approve plans that ignore bogus policy points. On the other hand, taking the school to task on their policy may give the policy more importance than it should have, and may not be necessary to obtain approval.

Another reason is the possible intimidation and confusion of new homeschoolers. If new homeschoolers are not acquainted with the law, they may comply with policies that exceed the law. This is where homeschool advocacy organizations such as AHEM enter the picture. By creating networks and support for new homeschoolers, we can help acquaint them with the law and their rights so they can make the best decisions possible. Also, it is the responsibility of any new homeschooler to learn the law and follow it; policies are not the law.

Whether “homeschooler approved” or “ideal” policies should be created is worth considering. A given group of homeschoolers may hammer out an agreement on a homeschool policy with a school committee; then other homeschoolers in that town may come along and choose to do something other than what the policy outlines, yet their choice may still be in keeping with *Charles*. Will those homeschoolers be taken to task for not wanting to follow the “homeschooler approved” policy? Will school officials be more likely to enforce a policy that they feel some ownership over, having spent hours in committee meetings and negotiation sessions?

### Conclusion

While *Charles* is vague on some points, in practice that translates to flexibility. Some towns choose a minimalist approach to overseeing homeschoolers, do not have any official policy, and largely leave homeschoolers to themselves. In towns with written homeschool policies, the policies aren't the same from town to town, nor do they have to be given the flexibility *Charles* offers. Again, they are simply administrative tools intended to streamline the contact between school officials and

homeschoolers, and guidelines in town policies ought to be in line with those of *Charles*. Under *Charles*, parents are free to homeschool regardless of our own level of education, and we are free to use whatever methods and materials we choose. We are also given a range of options for evaluation, including narrative progress reports we create, an option not available in many states with supposedly “better” homeschooling laws. The diversity among Massachusetts homeschoolers is significant. Fortunately, our homeschooling law is flexible enough to accommodate varying styles.

Homeschoolers always have the option of choosing to ignore policy points that exceed *Charles*. In the rare cases where this does not work in gaining approval of an education plan, joining together with other homeschoolers in your town to address extralegal policy points may be helpful. AHEM may be able to refer you to other homeschoolers who have done this if you choose to go this route. In such a case, ascertaining where the policy actually originated may be helpful. Even after the best efforts of homeschoolers and school officials working together, policies may still contain points that homeschoolers don't want to follow. Regardless of how any group of homeschoolers may have worked with school officials on a policy, the content of a family's education plan still comes down to the individual family and the *Charles* and *Brunelle* court rulings.

## Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers . . .

### Homeschooling: The Adventure Never Ends

by Joanne Casiello

I'm sure it was only yesterday that we began homeschooling our four sons here in Worcester, MA, but when I glance around the house I can't help noticing that I am the only one home. One of our goals of homeschooling was to raise independent children who would discover their gifts and go out into the world to use them. And they do.

I'd like to say that it was my infinite skill, wisdom, and patience as a homeschooling parent that inspired my sons to become the capable adults and nearly adults that they are now, but my sons might read this, and they keep me honest.

A homeschool support list member, impressed that my sons enjoy singing in choirs and rock bands and play

musical instruments, asked me how I had accomplished this. I wrote about singing to them from before they were born, always having musical instruments available, providing music instructors, playing music together. Third son looking over my shoulder said, "Um, if we were practicing music you wouldn't call us to come do our math homework."

So my four sons learned to be self-motivated, active learners because as long as they looked productive, I didn't stop and make them do something else. They learned rapidly that if they mentioned boredom, I might suggest they clean their rooms. If they fought with each other, I might decide it was a good time for a spelling lesson. Small boys engrossed in building with Legos, writing plays, painting pictures, designing science experiments, repairing bicycles, reading books, creating costumes, editing videos, inventing mechanical devices, or raising livestock were not interrupted.

From their parents example they learned what they loved and what they hated. If you have parents who give you a quick lesson in drosophilae gender identification and state of reproductivity when they hand capture random fruit flies that happen to zigzag past the dinner table you either grow up to be an animal science major like our second son, or to avoid college bio classes completely by becoming a software engineer like our first.

This homeschooling adventure led us down paths I had never anticipated. I carry snapshots in my head of sons halter training a camel in the snow, bargaining in Spanish in a market in Honduras, singing in a cathedral in England wearing the formal vestments of choir boys, barefoot while picking tomatoes under the hot sun with a woman from Cameroon. I shake my head in disbelief remembering that while dressed in four layers of winter clothing I videotaped a son in shorts and jersey playing a crucial soccer game in a near blizzard.

Along the way I learned that if a son said he could do something, he probably could. Who was I to tell my fourteen-year-old that boys do not learn to dance jazz tap in talent shows by watching old movies, attaching metal plates to sneakers and practicing for two months in the basement to Duke Ellington? He did it and his act was a huge hit.

The official homeschooling adventure is nearly over for us. John Paul is married, living in Boston, a graduate of Northeastern University working as a software engineer. Ben is a senior at UMASS Amherst majoring in animal science and spending his summers working for Heifer

International. Damon spent the summer as an intern in an engineering research and development department of St. Gobain. He'll finish his associate's degree in engineering at Quinsigamund Community College this year and transfer from there to a four year college as he moves towards a career in either material or bio-engineering, or maybe both. Gabe, at 16, the only one to officially still be homeschooling, works as a lifeguard, swim team coach, and makes training videos for lifeguard training courses. His formal internships in carpentry began this year as he continues to explore career options that mesh with his interests. The official adventure may be almost over, but the thrill of finding the best place and way to learn what you want to learn, I hope, will never end.

## Around AHEM . . .

### Educating Legislators

During the coming year, AHEM will embark on a campaign to educate Massachusetts legislators about homeschooling. We plan to hand deliver informational packets to state senators and representatives. Included in these packets will be AHEM's handout, "Information for Elected Officials," which we will revise to make more visually appealing by the addition of graphics, photographs, and color.

You can assist us with this campaign by volunteering to help in delivering the packets, or by your monetary contribution, which will help defray the costs of paper and printing. Working with AHEM in delivering the packets will be a good way for high school age homeschoolers to accrue community service hours. Younger children who want to help deliver packets are welcome if accompanied by an adult. Please send us any ideas you may have and please let us know if you are interested in helping out. We will keep you posted as the project gets underway and more details become available.

### Unit Study

In the fall of 2006, AHEM unveiled a unit study on Massachusetts history and government for homeschoolers. This unit provides a variety of activities for six weeks of study, covering topics in history, geography, economics, civics, and government such as:

- the purposes, principles, and practices of American government as established by the United States Constitution;

- the rights and responsibilities we have as citizens and how to exercise these rights and responsibilities in local, state, and national government;
- basic concepts of American government;
- history and politics of Massachusetts.

The activities were chosen to teach the fundamental ideas each week, while appealing to a range of learning styles and ages. Parents were encouraged to individualize the unit to suit their own child's present level of knowledge and interest. Some assignments involved reading, writing, and research; others involved hands-on games, art, even music and cooking.

Some weeks allowed for choosing one or more activities; other weeks required that more than one activity be completed. Some weeks had suggested field trips that tied in with the subject matter. Students kept a log of their accomplishments in a unit study notebook.

To request the Unit Study be emailed to you, send an email with your name and address to [info@ahem.info](mailto:info@ahem.info). You will be added to the Friends of AHEM list unless you specifically opt out.

We are pleased to be able to share with you the following two letters from homeschoolers with feedback about the Unit Study:

Dear AHEM,

Thank you for putting together this unit study. It was a fun way for me to learn. I went to most of the websites and liked the activities. Some of the books I liked reading were: *Vote!* by Christelow, *If I Were President* by Stier, *My Senator and Me: A Dog's Eye View of Washington D.C.* by Kennedy, and *Coming to America: The Story of Immigration* by Maestro. I'm starting to learn about immigration too.

I watched a debate with the MA governor candidates.

I will continue learning about the government. I hope you do another unit study!

Thanks, in advance, for sending a certificate of completion.

Sincerely,  
Hannah W.

Dear AHEM,

Thank you so much for setting this unit study up. I really enjoyed it. My favorite part was the State House visit, because I loved learning about the history behind the architecture of the rooms, and the marble was beautiful!

I would have added information about the making of coins and I liked everything so I would not take out anything.

I wrote a poem that I included. We went to the JFK Museum and the State House. Both trips were cool.

We did not meet any representatives but did write to them.

Thank you again for setting this up!

Yours Truly,  
Kaitlyn J., Age 10

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### **Politics** by Kaitlyn J.

Laws and Bills,  
President and Governor,  
White House and State House,  
They're not different to me.

George Bush and George Washington,  
John F. Kennedy and John Adams  
Andrew Johnson and Andrew Jackson,  
They're no different to me.

Declaration of Independence  
Bill of Rights  
They're no different to me.

They're different in  
lots of ways  
but one...  
They all have to do with  
politics to me!

October 26, 2006

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## Worcester Art Museum

<http://www.worcesterart.org/>

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts is planning a visit to the Worcester Art Museum for grades K-6 on **Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007** at 55 Salisbury St., Worcester, MA.

Experience magnificent artwork from five millennia of world cultures. View paintings by Cassatt, Gauguin, Goya, Monet, Sargent and Whistler; admire floor mosaics from the ancient city of Antioch; see cutting-edge contemporary art; and discover the Museum's many other treasures.

### Program and Tour for Grades K-6:

#### Greek Myths and Art

**10:30 AM – 12:30 PM, (MEET AT 10:15 AM in Lobby)**

Students will learn about Greek myths and art. By using printmaking techniques to create a two-dimensional representation of the decoration applied to Greek vases, students will focus on borders, geometric shapes, and telling a story through their images. This will include a half hour tour with an hour and a half art workshop. This activity is aimed at grades K-6 (but siblings a little older or younger are welcome). **Cost:** \$9.00/child for the tour and program. Parents are free and are welcome to accompany their child in the workshop, but are not allowed to *participate* in the workshop.

**If you want to go:** Mail a check made out to *Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts* to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Please include:

- the number of children and adults,
- names and ages of children,
- your address, and
- email or phone number.

Those with email will receive confirmation about a week before the visit.

Space is limited; **checks must be postmarked by January 19<sup>th</sup>**. No refunds after January 19<sup>th</sup>. Email [FieldTrips@AHEM.info](mailto:FieldTrips@AHEM.info) for more information or call 617-923-2368.

#### Directions:

<http://www.worcesterart.org/Information/directions.html> or (508) 799-4406. Parking lots are available on Salisbury, Lancaster, and Tuckerman Streets. On street parking is permitted on Lancaster and Tuckerman Streets.

Field trip participants will be added to the Friends of AHEM list unless they specifically opt out.

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## AHEM presents A Morning Matinee at the Theater: *Hamlet*

**Tuesday, March 13 at 10:00 AM**

*Hamlet* by William Shakespeare presented by New Repertory Theatre, Arsenal Center for the Arts, 321 Arsenal St., Watertown, MA.

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," as young Prince Hamlet, home from university, learns that his father was murdered. Who killed the king? Who can Hamlet trust? And how can Hamlet maintain his morality, while challenging the corrupt political order? Filled with unforgettable Shakespearean icons, ranging from the mad Ophelia to the sinister King Claudius, *Hamlet* contains many of Shakespeare's most stirring monologues, which explore the depths of the human psyche.

Be aware that this particular New Rep production is an abridged version of the play (90 minutes) designed for school shows. New Repertory Theatre is an award-winning company in the Boston area. For more info see: <http://www.newrep.org/>.

No food or drink is allowed in the theater — snacks may be consumed in the building but not in the theater itself. Panera Bread is next door to the theater, and will be open serving soup, sandwiches, bagels, pastries, and drinks all day.

**Cost:** \$13.00 per seat for adults or children. Home-schoolers ages six and up are welcome — no children under six allowed in the theater.

**If you want to go:** Mail a check made out to *Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts* to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474.

Please include

- your name
- the number of children and adults,
- ages of children,
- your address,
- and email or phone number.

Those with email will receive confirmation about a week before the visit.

Space is limited; **Checks must be postmarked by February 13<sup>th</sup>**. No refunds after February 13<sup>th</sup>. Email [FieldTrips@AHEM.info](mailto:FieldTrips@AHEM.info) for more information or call 781-648-5579.

#### Directions:

New Repertory Theatre is located at the Arsenal Center for the Arts, 321 Arsenal St., Watertown. For directions see <http://www.newrep.org/about/directions.html>.

## Parking

After turning into the Arsenal on the Charles Complex, take a right after the stop sign and an immediate left into the six story FREE parking garage.

Field trip participants will be added to the Friends of AHEM list unless they specifically opt out.

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## A Look Back at 2006

### Highlights of 2006

A trip down memory lane, or an opportunity to catch up on events and information you may have missed the first time around:

**In 2006, we enjoyed connecting with a cross section of Massachusetts homeschoolers in a variety of ways:**

- AHEM's Spring Social in May
- Field trips to
  - The Peabody Essex Museum in March
  - The Black Heritage Trail in April
  - The Massachusetts State House in April and October
  - *Ragtime* in May
  - The EcoTarium in June
  - *The Diary of Anne Frank* in September
  - The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in September
  - The Spellman Museum of Stamps and Postal History in October
  - Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in December

**Throughout the year, we reported on a variety of issues important to Massachusetts homeschoolers:**

- US DOE Clarifies IDEA Consent Override Procedures
- Update on H. R. 1815, The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006
- Homeschool Policies in Massachusetts
- The Logic Behind Our Legislative Alerts
- Homeschooling in the Northeast
- Legislation

**We were pleased to be able to offer:**

- New web pages on
  - Educators' Discounts
  - Learning Centers
  - Interim Programs for the year between high school and college
  - Books About Government
  - Exploring Massachusetts
  - AHEM membership cards

- AHEM trifold, with info on homeschooling in Massachusetts — perfect for handing out at gatherings or leaving at your local library
- *AHEM News* for those Friends without email
- Not-Back-to-School events listing

We were pleased to be able to announce:

- The AHEM Unit Study on Massachusetts History and Government
- An AHEM presence on the panel of North Suburban Home Learners' Homeschool Information Night: *Skipping School*

**Ongoing efforts include:**

- Legislative watch
- The Library Mailing Project, mailing brochures with info on homeschooling in Massachusetts, to 350+ Massachusetts libraries, along with an easy way for them to reorder
- Policy & Practice Database about homeschooling in Massachusetts. Our questionnaire was updated to gather information on issues of current interest to Massachusetts homeschoolers
- Communicating with our Friends
- Support group listings (40 statewide now listed; do you know of any in Nantucket or Dukes counties?)
- Events page
- County Contacts, available for phone or email help anytime.

## Thank you

As we bid goodbye to 2006, we want to be sure to thank all of you for your support over the past year, whether it came in the form of reading our emails or newsletter, filling out the questionnaire, joining us on a field trip, attending the Spring Social, handing out a trifold brochure, accessing Amazon.com through AHEM, or sending us a cash donation. Any level of interest and participation is greatly appreciated and is what fuels our efforts.

We look forward to meeting more of you in 2007, and continuing to grow the number of informed and active homeschoolers in Massachusetts. We always appreciate feedback on how we are doing and ideas about how we can serve you better.

## Looking ahead to 2007

- Updating our handout "Information for Elected Officials"
- Distributing information to state legislators about homeschooling in Massachusetts
- Keeping an eye out for state bills filed in the new legislative session that could affect homeschooling
- State House visits and other field trips

- Meeting and connecting with more Massachusetts homeschoolers. Help us by encouraging *your* friends to become Friends of AHEM!

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## Giving Thanks

We want to publicly recognize the wonderful people who have volunteered their time and talents to AHEM over the past year. We rely on volunteers, both on site and online, to support homeschooling in Massachusetts. If you have helped out in the past year, and aren't represented on the list below, please let us know! More info about volunteering for AHEM can be found at <http://www.ahem.info/VirtualVolunteers.htm>.

We are very grateful that the following people have considered AHEM a worthy cause to which to contribute some of their valuable time. Their very offer to help strengthens the foundation of the organization, but what they give doesn't stop there. In addition to the specific tasks they have taken on, they have been generous with their ideas about AHEM's mission and work:

### Annette D.

- Policy and Practice Database entry

### Bob S.

- Spring Social help

### Deb B.

- Spring Social Committee

### Dominique A.

- Spring Social help

### Gwendolyn A.

- Newsletter article

### Hannah P.

- Spring Social help

### Janet H.

- Database creation

### Mary L.

- Spring Social Committee

### Morgan H.

- Unit Study review

### Nadia S.

- Newsletter mailings

### Pat W.

- Newsletter article

### Patricia M.

- Book suggestions

### Peter B.

- Unit Study review

### Rachael B.

- Newsletter articles
- Book suggestions

### Rebecca B.

- Shared wisdom

### Rick S.

- Web site consultation
- Database consultation

### Roberta A.

- Policy and Practice Database entry
- County Contact
- Spring Social Committee
- New Board Member!

### Steve S.

- Spring Social help

### Suzanne M.

- County Contact
- Library Mailing help
- Spring Social Committee

## We can't thank you enough.

*Sincerely,  
AHEM Board of Directors*

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## Become a Friend of AHEM

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts (AHEM) is a nonprofit, independent, grassroots, volunteer-run, educational organization that gathers and disseminates information about homeschooling in Massachusetts through education, advocacy, and events. We believe that informed and active homeschoolers are their own best advocates in maintaining the right to independently homeschool. We welcome and value the participation of anyone interested in homeschooling in Massachusetts.

Friends of AHEM keep abreast of legislative and other issues that affect Massachusetts homeschoolers via an announcement-only email list or this newsletter. Friends of AHEM with email get special notice of AHEM events, field trips, and get-togethers.

**To become a Friend of AHEM, send your name and address to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474, or email [info@AHEM.info](mailto:info@AHEM.info). It's free!**

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Be proactive: become a Friend of AHEM. Even if your involvement is simply to stay informed, that strengthens all of us.

To become a Friend of AHEM and receive email updates, send your name, address, and email address to [info@AHEM.info](mailto:info@AHEM.info). To become a Friend of AHEM and receive *AHEM News* by US mail instead of email

updates, send your name and address to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Donations to offset cost are appreciated.

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

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## **Why Are You Getting This Newsletter?**

You are receiving this paper copy of the newsletter through the mail instead of our timely announcement-only emails because we have you listed as a Friend of AHEM, but either the email address we have for you has been bouncing, or we don't have an email address for you. We'd appreciate hearing from you with an updated email address in order to conserve paper and postage, and to keep our costs down.

If you would like to keep receiving this paper version of the newsletter, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to AHEM to support efforts like sending this newsletter to Massachusetts homeschoolers who don't have computer access. And please pass your newsletter on to a friend or leave it in your local library when you're done with it. Thanks!

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**If you don't wish to receive this newsletter,** please take a moment to let us know and we will stop sending it. Either email [info@ahem.info](mailto:info@ahem.info), call 781-641-0566, or drop us a line at AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. We really appreciate your help in keeping our lists current.

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