



# AHEM News

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc.

**What  
you  
need  
to  
know  
when  
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it**

## Visit the State House with AHEM!

The new year brings a new group of legislators to the State House, so to encourage Massachusetts homeschoolers to meet their representatives, AHEM is sponsoring an event on Monday, April 27, 2009 for homeschoolers to go and hand out packets with information about homeschooling to legislators. We plan to include a fun scavenger hunt as part of the day. State House tours will be available, as well as all that downtown Boston has to offer. So mark your calendar now to spend a day in the city this spring with other Massachusetts homeschoolers.

## Tips for Connecting with Your Legislator

**1. Your legislators want to hear what you have to say.** Legislators want to meet and speak with their constituents. Most people go into politics because they want to make a difference. Contact your legislator with the belief that he or she sincerely wants to hear what you have to say. Your voice and your vote count.

**2. Meet with your legislator.** It is very easy to set up a time to meet with your legislator. You can call his or her office and tell the legislative aide what day and time you will be visiting the State House. You can call both your state representative and state senator. Your legislator will either meet you him or herself, or have a staff member meet with you. The more notice you are able to give about your visit, the better your chances of meeting with your legislator, instead of one of the staff.

Generally, legislators are in their State House offices Monday through Thursday. You can also set up an appointment to meet with your legislator at his or her district office which will be somewhere in the geographic area he or she represents. Legislators are usually in the district offices on Fridays. You can find your legislator's name and contact info here: <http://www.mass.gov/legis/citytown.htm>. You can print out a copy of *Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers* ([www.ahem.info/MeetMAHomeschoolers04b.pdf](http://www.ahem.info/MeetMAHomeschoolers04b.pdf)) to share, or

just drop by to introduce yourselves as homeschooling constituents.

**3. Keep it simple.** You do not have to go armed with facts and figures. Most legislators just want to meet you and your family. Legislators may have questions about homeschooling, but it has been our experience during group State House visits that their questions usually have more to do with the day-to-day life of homeschoolers, than any deep philosophical discussion about homeschooling.

**4. You are your own best advocate.** You and your family may be the first homeschooling constituents your legislator has met. He or she may have a preconceived idea as to what homeschoolers are like. Legislators need to see that homeschooling families are just like other families. We only differ in that we have decided on an alternative form of education. Connecting with your legislator can help him or her see homeschoolers as constituents with whom he or she feels comfortable.

**5. See your visit as an educational experience.** Visiting your legislator is an empowering experience for both you and your children. It is a learning experience for children to see that they have a voice in representative government. It has been our experience that legislators sincerely enjoy meeting and talking to children. You and your children can prepare for the visit by visiting the Massachusetts General Court web site, especially the page on the lawmaking process: <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/lawmkng.htm>. Younger children might enjoy the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Kids' Zone: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/ciskid/kididx.htm>. Relax, and enjoy the time you spend with your legislators.

**6. Follow up your visit with a thank you letter.** It is always a good idea to personally thank your legislator for taking the time to meet with you and your family. Sending a thank you letter will go a long way in cementing good feelings about the visit.

## Current State Issues . . .

### Legislative Update

The current legislative session, which got underway in January of 2007, ended on December 31, 2008. Any pending bills that were not signed into law are considered "dead." The bill sponsors must refile these bills during the upcoming legislative session if the bills are to be reconsidered.

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Photo courtesy of freefoto.com

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The following bills were included in **SB 2766**, “An Act to Improve Dropout Prevention and Reporting of Graduation Rates”:

- **HB 394**, “An Act Raising the Compulsory Attendance Age to 18”
- **HB 401**, “An Act Relative to School Age Attendance Requirements”
- **HB 402**, “An Act to Prevent Students From Dropping Out of School”
- **HB 463**, “An Act Relative to Encouraging Students to Stay in School”
- **HB 576**, “An Act to Increase the Mandatory School Age”
- **HB 577**, “An Act Relative to the Development of a Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent Students from Dropping Out of School”
- **SB 304**, “An Act Relative to School Attendance”
- **SB 329**, “An Act Changing the Maximum Required Age for School Attendance”
- **SB 343**, “An Act to Encourage School Attendance and to Strengthen Parental responsibility”
- **SB 357**, “An Act Relative to School Attendance”
- **SB 366**, “An Act to Amend School Attendance”

**SB 2766** was signed into law by Governor Patrick on August 14, 2008. This law will make tools available to school districts for accurate reporting of high school graduation and drop out data. The law also establishes the “Graduation and Dropout Commission” to study dropout prevention and dropout recovery programs throughout the state. This commission will

make recommendations on certain issues, such as raising the compulsory attendance age from 16 to 18. The new law can be found in Chapter 315 of the Acts of 2008. <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw08/sl080315.htm>

**HB 4536**, which included **HB 400**, “An Act Relative to the Awarding of High School Diplomas,” was an order which gave the Education committee the authority to sit during the recess of the General Court to investigate and study issues relating to MCAS. On February 14, 2008, this bill was discharged to the committee on House Rules. There has been no activity on the bill since that time.

**HB 4596**, which included **HB 416**, “An Act Providing That Parents and Legal Guardians be Held Responsible for School Attendance of Children in Their Care,” was an order authorizing the committee on Education to make an investigation and study of certain House documents concerning governance, parents and bilingual education. There has been no activity on this bill since it was discharged to the committee on House Rules on March 12, 2008.

**HB 4530**, which included **HB 507**, “An Act Relative to Homeschooling” and **HB 523**, “An Act Permitting Non Public School Students to take MCAS Exam,” has had no activity since being discharged to House Ways and Means on February 13, 2008. This bill would have given the DOE responsibility for investigating the feasibility and costs associated with allowing non-public school and homeschool students to voluntarily take MCAS in grade 10. Since the bill has not moved out of the House Ways and Means committee as of December 31, 2008, it appears that this bill is dead for this legislative session.

**HB 399**, “An Act Relative to Full Day Kindergarten” and **HB 527**, “An Act Relative to Mandatory Minimum Age for School Attendance” were combined into **HB 4748**, “An order relative to authorizing the committee on Education to make an investigation and study of certain House documents concerning kindergarten, literacy, technology, school time and learning and miscellaneous education issues.” **HB 4748** was discharged to the committee on House Rules on May 15, 2008. There has been no activity on this bill since that time.

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

## Summary of Data from Homeschool Policy and Practice Database, December 2008

Here are collated responses to Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts’s questionnaire about homeschool policy and practice in Massachusetts. For over five 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 267 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 web site. 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.

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

Sixty-six percent of respondents report that school officials do not ask for face-to-face meetings. Ten percent report that school officials ask for an initial meeting with homeschoolers when they filed their first plan; eighty percent of these agreed to a one-time meeting when first starting homeschooling. Twenty-four percent of homeschoolers are asked to meet annually with school officials. Of these, forty-seven percent choose to comply, fifty-three percent do not. While it sometimes takes 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-seven 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.**

Sixty-nine percent of respondents are not asked for a schedule or number of hours. Thirty-one percent of respondents are asked to supply a schedule or number of hours per subject.

Of those asked to supply a schedule, thirty-one percent comply, and sixty-nine percent do not. Forty-four percent of these sixty-nine percent state instead that they will meet or exceed the 900/990 hours of instruction in the public schools, and that seems to be acceptable. The other fifty-six percent of those who said they did not comply with giving a schedule did not specify how they respond (i.e. they might ignore the request, they might state they will meet or exceed the public schools' hours of instruction, or they might give some other response). In any case, there were no negative consequences for those who chose to decline giving a grid-type schedule.

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

- Fifty-four percent of respondents write a progress report. Some 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, the Stanford Test and others.
- Twelve percent of respondents submit no evaluation at all.
- Ten percent of respondents submit work samples.
- Six percent of respondents indicated their evaluation method varies; parents choose from year to year.
- One percent of respondents indicated use of a form of evaluation other than testing, progress reports, or work samples.

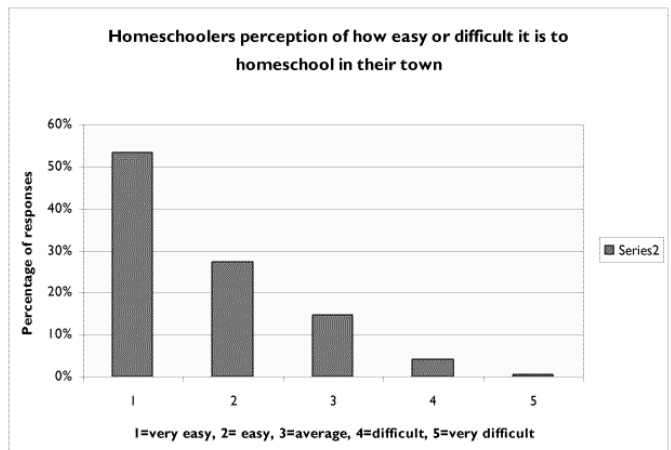
Eighty-eight percent of homeschoolers who indicated frequency submit evaluation once a year, ten percent submit twice a year, two percent submit four times a year.

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

Seventy-nine percent of respondents receive an approval letter; fifteen percent receive one if they request one. Six 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.



**“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?”**

Eighty-one percent of respondents reported their town to be easy or very easy to deal with, 15% reported their town to be average, 4% reported their town to be difficult, and no respondents considered their town to be very difficult to deal

with. Some towns that homeschoolers rate as friendly include Arlington, Boston, Northborough, Watertown and Westford.

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 on the back page of this newsletter.

## Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers . . .

### What About Socialization?

By Karen Kolp

When we started homeschooling, socialization was the least of our concerns. Our oldest, then seven-year-old Luke, suffered a scary array of health problems brought on by academic pressure. A voracious reader with a wild imagination and lots of buddies, Luke's problems were brought on only by writing and spelling. Since these skills must be taught, and a certain pace must be kept up, he would likely continue to suffer while attending school.

"But," concerned family and friends asked when we pulled him out of second grade last November, "what about socialization?" They worried that Luke would turn into someone without friends or connections to the outside world, a modern-day Boo Radley. My husband and I took many deep breaths and asked them to trust us. Within a few weeks as a homeschooler, Luke's night terrors and migraines ceased completely. After several months, his weight stabilized and the tantrums stopped. He's now a happy, healthy boy.

Luke learns by doing: visiting playgrounds, stores, and museums, running and climbing, exploring nature, and reading about his passions. He uses math for real-life solutions (sales tax on a four dollar toy) and game-playing (Star Wars Monopoly). He has the confidence to daydream, and the time and

know-how to find out the answers to any questions that come up. Luke has made tremendous academic and health gains this past year, but much to my surprise the biggest benefit has been the positive socialization. Homeschooling, the ultimate extension of multi-age education, is a great way for kids to grow up because they are out in the wide world, experiencing their communities firsthand. Consequently, Luke and his younger brother, four-year-old Owen, play happily with children of all ages, and converse intelligently with adults, too.

For Owen, it's always been this way. Luke, however, had to unlearn two-and-a-half years of school-enforced socialization. He had trouble letting go, for example, of the "girls have cooties" stereotype. In first grade he would ask me to turn off music featuring female vocalists because "I only like music sung by boys." Learning that girls make excellent playmates was enlightening for Luke, and sets a good example for his younger brother. Additionally, in school Luke learned to hold in his feelings, causing anxiety and, unsurprisingly in retrospect, some of the major health problems that started us homeschooling in the first place.

Luke and his little brother belong to a Pokémon club. Recently, Luke wanted a bag to carry his Pokémon key chains, which he treats like adopted children. When I dug up an old purse (the kind that surely would be made fun of in school), he was thrilled. Now, just like the others in his club, his Pokémon travel with him wherever he goes. Luke carries his key chains proudly, and the joy he feels at being part of this little band - of *belonging* - is palpable.

People worry that if a kid doesn't get used to the negative socialization that is so prevalent in schools, perpetrated both by the adults and other kids, they'll never develop a tough enough skin to be able to weather negativity later, in the real world. I used to think that, too, but my son's experience has changed my mind. Like Luke, if a kid has confidence in his own abilities and ideas, if he's secure in the knowledge that he belongs in some way, to some group, then the thick skin will develop - not as a scarred, tattered skin but as one that is whole and well-insulated.

This is what homeschooling has taught me.

*Karen Kolp, a writer, chronicles the adventures of her homeschooling family at [www.stoneageteachie.blogspot.com](http://www.stoneageteachie.blogspot.com).*



## Around AHEM . . .

### Happy New Year from AHEM! Highlights from 2008

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

In 2008, we enjoyed connecting with a cross section of Massachusetts homeschoolers in a variety of ways:

- AHEM's Spring Social in April
- Whole Education Without Schooling Conference in October
- Field trips to:
  - The Jackson Homestead in January and March
  - *The Misanthrope* in February
  - *Cyrano* in March
  - PhotoWalk of Boston's Back Bay in May
  - Tour of *The Boston Globe* in May
  - Museum of Science High School Science Lectures in September and October
  - *Othello* in November
  - RISD Museum of Art in November
  - *A Christmas Carol* in December

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

- S. 3076, "Home School Opportunities Make Education Sound Act of 2008"
- Discounted MBTA Fares for Homeschooled Students
- California homeschooling case *In re; Rachel* and its reversal
- Massachusetts Legislation

We were pleased to be able to offer:

- AHEM membership cards
- AHEM brochures, with info on homeschooling in Massachusetts – perfect for handing out at gatherings or leaving at your local library
- AHEM Unit Study on Massachusetts History and Government
- *AHEM News* for those Friends without email
- Not-Back-to-School events listing

We were pleased to be able to announce:

- Updated info-about-homeschooling-in-Massachusetts brochure
- Homeschool display materials and tips for libraries

Ongoing efforts include:

- Legislative watch
- The Library Mailing Project, keeping Massachusetts libraries stocked with informative brochures and posters about homeschooling in MA, along with an easy way for them to reorder
- Policy & Practice Database about homeschooling in Massachusetts.
- Communicating with our Friends

- Support group listings (48 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 2008, 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, participating in our effort to educate legislators at the State House, handing out an AHEM 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 2009, 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 2009

- Visiting the State House – Save the date: Monday, April 27, 2009
- Conference highlights available in audible format
- A fresh new look for the AHEM web site
- Keeping an eye out for state bills that could affect homeschooling
- More field trips
- Meeting and connecting with more Massachusetts homeschoolers. Help us by encouraging *your* friends to become Friends of AHEM!



### 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 AHM 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 AHM's mission and work:

- Andrew H.
- Anne C.
- Bob S.
- Carol H.
- Casey O.
- Emily M.
- Erin M.
- Estrella G.
- Fred S.
- Glenn D.
- Hannah P.
- Joanne C.
- Julia B.
- Leah S.
- Lexie J.
- Karen K.
- Margaret G.
- Mary S.
- Mary Jo S.
- Nadia S.
- Paz G.
- Phillip Y.
- Rick S.
- Ron M.
- Suzanne M.
- Sheila S.
- Venus T.

We can't thank you enough.

Sincerely,  
AHM Board of Directors

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## Museum of Science High School Science Lecture – Science, Art, and Creativity – How Do They All Connect?

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts has reserved space for ages 14 - 18 at this Museum of Science High School Science Lecture. The lecture lasts 45 minutes and you can enjoy the museum exhibit halls until closing. (MEET AT 9:15 AM in Lobby; we will enter the lecture as a group.)

**Friday, March 26, 2009**

(checks must be postmarked by February 27)

Dr. John Warner, President and CTO of Warner Babcock Institute for Green Chemistry, discusses the meshing of art, science, and creativity and explores their boundaries and connections. Following the presentation, participate in activities and demonstrations. For more details, see [http://www.mos.org/educators/field\\_trip\\_resources/](http://www.mos.org/educators/field_trip_resources/)

[field\\_trip\\_activities/high\\_school\\_science\\_series](#).

**Cost** is \$5/person (teen and adult) to reserve your spot; the full price will be refunded to you at the museum, making your visit FREE. If you don't show up, your money will be donated to support the non-profit mission of AHM.

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

- the number of teens and adults,
- name of responsible adult\*
- ages of teens,
- your address, and
- email or phone number.

\*Teens need an adult to be responsible for them – either a parent, or another adult with whom the parent has made prior arrangements. Those with email will receive confirmation about a week before the visit.

**Space is limited and spots are allotted in the order checks are received; checks must be postmarked by February 27.** No refunds after February 27 except those made to attendees at the museum on February 27.

You can purchase lunch at the cafés, or bring your own to be eaten outside.

Email [FieldTrips@AHM.info](mailto:FieldTrips@AHM.info) for more information or call 781-641-0566.

### Directions:

See [http://www.mos.org/visitor\\_info/maps\\_and\\_directions](http://www.mos.org/visitor_info/maps_and_directions).

### Parking

With a chaperone sticker, parking is \$3 per car payable to the museum at the box office in the main lobby before you exit.

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

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## Morning Matinees at the Theatre

AHM's popular Morning Matinee at the Theater season continues with two stellar productions at Watertown's New Repertory Theatre. Plan now to attend high quality, professional productions at drastically reduced prices. Tickets for both shows are \$13 each. All performances are at the Arsenal Center for the Arts, 321 Arsenal St., Watertown, MA. All shows are for ages six and up.

New Rep on Tour productions are specially created (often abridged) for school audiences and last about 90 minutes:

- John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*: Monday, March 9, 2009 (checks must be postmarked by January 31, 2009; no refunds after January 31.)

On the main stage, AHM is offering slashed prices for a full-length production which will probably last 2-3 hours:

- Thursday, May 7, 2009: Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (checks

**must be postmarked by April 1; no refunds after April 1)**

For more details on any of these shows, see <http://www.ahem.info/FieldTrips.htm>.

No food or drink is allowed in the theater. Panera Bread is next door to the theater, and will be open serving soup, salads, sandwiches, bagels, pastries, and drinks all day.

**Cost:** \$13.00 per seat for adults or children (ages six and up).

**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,
- your address,
- email or phone number,
- show(s) you are signing up for and for each one:
  - the number of children and adults,
  - ages of children.

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

Space is limited for all shows. Email [FieldTrips@AHEM.info](mailto:FieldTrips@AHEM.info) for more information or call 781-648-5579.

#### **Directions & Parking**

See <http://www.newrep.org/directions.php> for directions. 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.

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## **AHEM Web Site Makeover**

Next time you have Internet access, check out the new and improved AHEM web site, [www.AHEM.info](http://www.AHEM.info). All the same important information is still there, but now the home page gets you where you want to go fast.

If you are just starting to consider homeschooling as an option for your family, *Thinking About Homeschooling* directs you to recommended books and articles.

If you have made the decision, and need to know what to do now to begin homeschooling officially in Massachusetts, *Getting Started Homeschooling* directs you to a succinct overview of your rights and responsibilities, and a walkthrough for writing an education plan, including a sample plan template that is widely used in Massachusetts.

If you are currently homeschooling, explore *Finding Support and Resources*. We listened to feedback about what parts of the web site active homeschoolers want quick access to, and have links right on the home page to Support Groups, Events, Educators' Discounts, the AHEM Unit Study on Massachusetts History and Government, inspirational stories by and about Massachusetts homeschoolers, *What About College?*, and more.

And we didn't stop there. The final section, *Reaching Out*, has information for the media and librarians, as well as ideas big

and small for homeschoolers to join AHEM in supporting homeschooling as an educational option in Massachusetts.

Please take a look at the newly redesigned and reorganized site, and tell us what you think!

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## **Become a Friend of AHEM**

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

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. 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.

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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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**WELCOME TO AHEM!** With your help, homeschoolers in Massachusetts are empowering themselves to keep Massachusetts a homeschool friendly environment by sharing information and support in dealing with school officials. You can become proactive right away by filling out this form and returning it to:

**AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474-0021 or email to [info@AHEM.info](mailto:info@AHEM.info).**

**PLEASE PRINT NEATLY**

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be added to the Friends of AHEM email list for periodic updates on the state of homeschooling in MA, including emergency info if warranted? (circle one)      Yes                      No

AHEM respects your privacy and will not share your name or contact information with any other organization.

Check anything you'd like to find out more about:

- ☐ Virtual Volunteering  
☐ Helping with conferences, workshops, or other events  
☐ Getting AHEM brochures on how to get started homeschooling in MA to distribute at meetings, in libraries, etc.

Please provide the following information about policy and procedure to be added to our town-by-town database of homeschooling policies in Massachusetts. Use extra paper if you need to.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent or entity in charge of local homeschool policy: \_\_\_\_\_

How much in advance of the school year do school officials ask that you submit homeschooling plans? What do you do?  
Please explain.

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

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

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

Form of assessment: (circle whatever you provide)

Progress report	Work samples	Standardized testing	Other (please specify)
How many times a year?		If a test, which one?	

Do school officials provide you with a letter of approval?

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

Does your town have a written homeschooling policy? Have homeschoolers in your town worked with school officials to create a homeschooling policy? Please elaborate.

Have any of your children entered tenth grade or higher in a public high school after having homeschooled through ninth grade or later? If so, please tell us details of the transition, i.e. did the high school award credit for homeschool work? How was grade placement decided? Etc.

If you use a correspondence or distance learning school, which one? Do you still seek approval from your local school district? Whether yes or no, how does it work?

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? (Circle one)

1 very easy                      2 easy                      3 average                      4 difficult                      5 very difficult

Any other information you feel would be useful for other homeschoolers to know about how your town puts homeschooling policy into practice? Please use extra paper if necessary and please attach any written policies you've received from your school district.

Thanks for taking the time to help other Massachusetts homeschoolers! Return questionnaire to

**AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474-0021**