

AHEM News

Volume 4 • No 3 • Spring 2007

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc.

What
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Current State Issues . . .

Educating Legislators

On Monday, April 30, 2007, between 10:00 AM (OK to arrive later) and noon, we will be delivering packets to legislators at the State House. Teens (14+) and adults are welcome to come by themselves, younger children are encouraged to help if accompanied by an adult. Find the AHEM representative in Doric Hall on the 2nd floor, and she will get you started. RSVPs to info@ahem.info or 781-641-0566 are appreciated, but not required. We want as many people to be involved as possible so come at the last minute if that's what works for you. No experience necessary!

After performing your community service in the morning, enjoy a spring day in the city. Have lunch and take a walk in the Public Gardens with a ride on the swan boats, or walk the Freedom Trail, or window shop on Newbury St., or visit one of the many great museums or historic sites downtown. More ideas can be found here: www.ahem.info/ExploringMassachusetts.htm. Convince some friends to join you and have even more fun!

Directions to the State House

We recommend taking the T: Take the Red or Green Line to Park Street Station. Once outside the station walk up Park Street toward the State House.

If you prefer to drive, see directions to the Boston Common Garage for parking:

http://www.mccahome.com/bcg_dir.html

The State House is at the corner of Beacon and Park Streets. Visitors should enter at the General Hooker entrance which is just to the right of the main gate if you are facing the State House. Visitors can proceed past the statue of Civil War General Joseph Hooker, then once inside after going through security, go to the left, past the State Bookstore and at the end of the hallway on the left take the elevators up to the second floor. (For stairs, proceed past elevators and take another left — near room 190) An AHEM representative will be waiting in Doric Hall on the second floor. Handicap entrances are located at Bowdoin Street or Ashburton Park.

Legislative Update

The new two year legislative session got underway in January of this year. At this time, 3935 bills have been filed in the House and another 2162 bills have been filed in the Senate. It is a long process for filed bills to make their way through the legislative process. Only a small number of these bills will ever be signed into law.

Several bills have been identified by AHEM as having the potential to affect homeschoolers. There are several that would raise the compulsory attendance age to 18, one that would make kindergarten attendance a requirement, and a couple that would permit homeschoolers to take the MCAS exam. For a list of bills with numbers, see the box at the end of this article.

Of special concern is House Bill 507, "An Act Relative to Home Schooling," filed by Rep. Loscocco. Rep. Loscocco filed the same bill during the last legislative session.

Thoughts on HB 507

HB 507, a bill filed by Rep. Paul Loscocco (Republican - Eighth Middlesex), has been assigned to the Education committee. The bill would amend Section 1I of chapter 69 of the general laws. The bill refers to students who are "otherwise instructed." Since homeschoolers in Massachusetts fall under the category of "otherwise instructed" in the Massachusetts general laws, this bill would affect homeschoolers. While the text of the bill refers to private and parochial students as well as to otherwise instructed students, the title of the bill says, "Home Schooling."

The bill (text below) would:

- require schools to allow homeschoolers and private school students residing in their district to take the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exam;
- allow use of public funds to pay for the administration of the test;
- require schools to award diplomas to homeschoolers who pass MCAS and request a diploma;

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AHEM

- allow schools to offer “remedial” help for homeschoolers who “fail... to meet the requirements of the competency determination;”

AHEM’s position: As parents who have chosen to “otherwise educate” our children, we feel this bill is unnecessary, and could possibly create problems for homeschoolers in exchange for dubious benefit.

In reading the bill, we find some grey areas to consider:

This bill could create administrative confusion for homeschoolers and school officials.

- **Is this bill asking for special treatment of homeschoolers** by requiring schools to issue diplomas based solely on passing MCAS, thereby rendering local graduation requirements meaningless? Or would superintendents feel the need to fulfill their mandate to assure that every student receiving a high school diploma in their district fulfills local graduation requirements, which include coursework as well as a passing grade on the MCAS, and so make excessive demands on homeschoolers?
- **How might the requirement that schools issue diplomas to homeschoolers who pass the MCAS affect the expectations schools have for all homeschoolers** in their district, any of whom may decide to opt for the exam at some future date? Would approval of plans become tied to how closely they are aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks? Would superintendents feel obligated

to disapprove of future homeschool plans for homeschooled students who have failed MCAS?

- **How might superintendents respond to homeschoolers who fail the exam**, given that the current text of the bill appears to allow the school to decide whether to provide a remedial plan to a homeschooled student who fails MCAS? Although the bill allows private and parochial students to take MCAS, those students are not included in the section that addresses remedial plans.

Other concerns:

- According to the Massachusetts Department of Education, “...the MCAS tests, ... are designed to measure the academic progress of students enrolled in publicly supported schools and the performance of those schools.” The MCAS is intended to reflect how well actual schools are performing in implementing the frameworks outlined in the Education Reform Act of 1993, as well as to assess whether individual students are being educated sufficiently through the application of the frameworks. Might using a test that was created for these very specific purposes as nothing more than a hoop to jump through to be issued a diploma from a school the student did not actually attend feel to school officials like mocking the test and the system it is designed to evaluate? Might it create antagonism between homeschoolers and schools?
- **The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), requires public school students to fulfill a range of requirements for their school to be eligible for federal funding.** These include the statewide MCAS exam; providing the same academic standards for all schools and children in the State; and “adequate yearly progress,” of which measurements include graduation rates for high schools and attendance rates for elementary and middle schools. Would it be a violation of NCLB to issue a diploma to students who may not have met all the federal requirements? Whether it actually is or not, will superintendents be confused and concerned about this in practice, and make homeschoolers’ lives more difficult because of that confusion?
- **Whenever a bill is introduced, the possibility exists that it will be modified as it passes through the legislative process.** In the current climate of high stakes testing and greater accountability, is it in homeschoolers’ best interests to push for a bill that would require spending state and local time and money on homeschoolers, with no benefit to the

public school system? Does this bill create an opportunity and justification for our legislature to demand greater regulation of homeschooling in Massachusetts?

Also consider:

- **High school diplomas are not necessary for homeschoolers to pursue college or other goals** in the majority of cases. For most of homeschooling history in Massachusetts, homeschoolers have gone on to pursue goals after homeschooling, including matriculating at selective universities, without diplomas.
- **Most colleges are familiar with homeschooled applicants**, and are primarily interested in their portfolios, the meat of the application, considering a high school diploma or GED a bureaucratic box to check off in some cases. It is wise to check with places of interest, such as candidate colleges, workplaces, or the military to find out what their acceptance and matriculation requirements are.
- **High school diplomas are not necessary for federal financial aid.** See <http://www.ahem.info/FAFSA.htm>.
- **In cases where diplomas are required, alternatives to public high school diplomas are currently available to homeschoolers.** The General Education Development Diploma (GED) already exists as a widely accepted credential, as well as other alternatives to public high school diplomas, such as parent issued diplomas, or enrollment in an umbrella school or a correspondence school that offers a diploma program.
- The GED is an appropriate test for students such as homeschoolers, who have embraced an alternative education style, to measure their knowledge and academic skills against those of today's traditional high school graduates. The GED Tests measure knowledge in five different areas: language arts, writing; social studies; science; reading; and mathematics. Statistics: About two-fifths of graduating high school seniors don't pass the tests under current score requirements. About one in twenty first-year college students is a GED graduate. (<http://www.acenet.edu/cilll/ged/index.cfm>)

How to respond

If you'd like to voice your opinion about this bill, the most effective thing you can do is to let your own state senator and representative know your position. (Find their names and contact info here:

www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php)

Best is a letter in your own words, but even just a phone call or email stating your position, no reason given, is better than saying nothing at all. If you write a letter, it can also help to copy your letter to the Chairs of the Joint committee on Education, Senator Robert Antonioni and Representative Patricia Haddad.

If your senator or representative happens to be a member of the Joint committee on Education (see members here:

www.ahem.info/CommitteeonEducationArtsHumanities.htm), then we urge you to take the extra time to write him or her a letter in your own words, as your opinion will carry more weight than the average Joe's.

If you would send AHEM a copy of your letter, or just let us know that you've made your voice heard, we'd be most grateful. Please drop us a line at info@ahem.info or PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474.

Points to consider when formulating your thoughts:

- HB 507 places an administrative and fiscal burden on the public schools.
- The MCAS is intended to reflect how well actual schools are performing in implementing the frameworks outlined in the Education Reform Act of 1993, as well as to assess whether individual students are being educated sufficiently through the application of the frameworks. The MCAS were developed for a specific purpose, one that is beyond the scope of homeschooling.
- Oversight of home education is a local function in Massachusetts, enabling school authorities to exercise discretion and flexibility in evaluating home education plans and student progress. This bill interferes with local oversight by requiring schools to issue diplomas to homeschoolers who pass the MCAS and request a diploma. We are concerned that this requirement could create administrative confusion for homeschoolers and school officials.
- Are the requirements of the bill in sync with the federal *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, which requires public school students to fulfill a range of requirements for their school to be eligible for federal funding?
- When we chose to homeschool, we did it with eyes open, making the decision to forego public high school diplomas in favor of the freedom that homeschooling allows us and our children.
- Most colleges are familiar with homeschooled applicants, who have chosen an alternative form of education. Diplomas are not necessary for college admission or to qualify for federal financial aid.

Text of HB 507

AN ACT RELATIVE TO HOME SCHOOLING.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1I of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 official edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the sixth paragraph the following two paragraphs:

The superintendent of every public school district in the commonwealth shall on or before October 15 each year notify in writing the headmaster of each private and parochial school and the parent or guardian of every student who is otherwise instructed within the district of the opportunity for said private or parochial school or otherwise instructed student voluntarily to participate in and with the statewide assessment of students in grades 4, 8, and 10 as authorized in section 1I of chapter 69; provided, however, that the results of any such assessment tests by private and parochial school students or of any student who is otherwise instructed shall not be used to evaluate the performance of any public school within the school district or the performance of the school district and all records of such results shall be collected and maintained separately by the department; provided further, however, that no public funds shall be expended by the public school district for any costs associated with the acquisition, distribution, or administration of said tests relative to any student of each such private and parochial school unless that student resides in the public school district where such private or parochial school is located. Any private or parochial school or the parents or guardians of any student attending any private or parochial school or of any student who is otherwise instructed electing to have any student participate in said testing shall notify the superintendent of the decision no later than November 15, with any such participation at all times to be voluntary.

Any student who is otherwise instructed pursuant to this section and who requests a diploma from a public high school shall be required to satisfy the requirements of the competency determination established in section 1D of chapter 69 as a condition for receiving said diploma, which upon satisfaction of such requirements of competency determination shall be granted; provided, however, that the assessment instrument used to verify competency determination shall be given at state expense; and provided further that in the case of any student who is otherwise instructed and fails to meet the

requirements of the competency determination, the school district may, but shall not be required to, provide a remedial plan as defined in subsection (i) of section 1D of chapter 69; provided, however, that nothing herein shall limit the rights of any student otherwise instructed who re-enrolls as a student within the public school district.

Links

Section 1I of chapter 69 of the general laws
<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/69-1i.htm>

Section 1D of chapter 69 of the general laws
<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/69-1d.htm>

The following bills have been assigned to the Education committee:

On the House side

- HB 416, "An Act Providing That Parents and Legal Guardians be Held Responsible for School Attendance of Children in Their Care"
- HB 399, "An Act Relative to Full Day Kindergarten"
- HB 400, "An Act Relative to the Awarding of High School Diplomas"
- HB 527, "An Act Relative to Mandatory Minimum Age for School Attendance"
- 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"
- HB 507, "An Act Relative to Homeschooling"
- HB 523, "An Act Permitting Non Public School Students to take MCAS Exam"

On the Senate side

- 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 304, "An Act Relative to School Attendance"
- SB 329, "An Act Changing the Maximum Required Age for School Attendance"

You can search for the text of any of these bills at
<http://www.mass.gov/legis/legis.htm>.

Clearing Our Throats

Unsnarling *Charles*

Understanding Massachusetts homeschooling law is not a straightforward undertaking. Yet it is an important one. Once you understand your rights, you can stand up for them. Homeschooling in Massachusetts is a purely local undertaking, with each district performing oversight functions. (The Massachusetts Department of Education has no authority to approve or disapprove homeschooling plans, and in fact plays no role whatsoever in the implementation of homeschooling regulation in our state.) The following is our own interpretation of *Charles*'s¹ intent regarding issues such as prior approval, written approval, evaluation, midyear changes, and testing, and does not constitute legal advice; it is for informational purposes only.

Prior Approval

While it is true that the compulsory attendance statute (Mass G.L. section 76, chapter 1) requires that approval be granted in advance of homeschooling, *Charles*'s interpretation of this is vague. The court in *Charles* found against the family by determining that homeschool regulation is not unconstitutional in Massachusetts. The basis for this determination comes from the Massachusetts Constitution's statement that the state should "cherish" the education of its citizenry. In the court's estimation, this means that the state has an interest in the education of its citizenry that must be upheld.

At the same time, the court acknowledged the constitutionally protected parental right to homeschool. The *Charles* decision was written in an attempt to balance these two interests: the state's interest in the education of its citizenry and the parental right to homeschool. Prior approval of an education plan and evaluation method is the device by which *Charles* assures the state's interest. However, the court recognized that too much authority given to the school could infringe on parental rights. It says this directly: "...we caution the superintendent or the school committee that the approval of a homeschool proposal must not be conditioned on requirements that are not essential to the State interest..."² No superintendent or school committee has the authority to give or deny a family permission to homeschool. The only authority they retain is that of approving or disapproving the

plan, and the only agenda inherent in that authority is to ensure the child is being educated.

Still, we are left with the somewhat contradictory message of the statute's absolute requirement of prior approval, and the statement in *Charles* that "...if the parents commence the education of their children at home in the face of the school committee's refusal to approve the parents' homeschool proposal, the burden of proof... shifts to the school committee to show that the instruction outlined in the homeschool proposal fails..." This is the most direct reference in *Charles* to what should happen if a family commences homeschooling without approval, and it directly states that in such a case, the burden of proof shifts to the school. It has been argued that the burden shifting protects the parents' interest by creating "a presumption of adequacy of parental proposals for homeschooling."³ Only a handful of families complying with *Charles* have ever reached the courtroom level in a dispute with the schools. In each of these few cases, the family has won. It is important to remember that once a family has submitted a plan that satisfies the guidelines outlined in *Charles*, that family is making a good faith effort to comply with the law, and that counts. In every Massachusetts homeschooling dispute that has made it to court that we know of dating from the late 1970s (*Perchemlides*, *Charles*, *Searles*, *Brunelle*, *Ivan*) the child/ren have never been ordered to attend school during the court proceedings.

Families who choose to homeschool, whether it involves not enrolling a child in school in the first place, or withdrawing a child from one, need to decide for themselves whether to commence homeschooling once the plan is submitted, taking into consideration what is best for their child. Important factors to remember are that while the school has no authority to deny the right to homeschool, they do have authority to take legal action. However, no child has ever been ordered back to school during the approval process, and no school has ever assumed the burden of proof presented in *Charles* and won. In fact, the number of times it has been attempted is miniscule. In reality, expediting approval has been the norm. Also, based on longtime feedback from Massachusetts homeschoolers, and judging from AHM's research, the vast majority of homeschoolers never have a dispute with the school.

If a superintendent and/or school committee disapproves a plan, the school has a few options. In the vast majority of cases, when a school takes issue with an

¹ CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHARLES & others, 399 Mass. 324 (1987).

² *Charles* at 337.

³ Ira C. Lupu, *Boston University Law Review*, Vol. 67: 971.

aspect of the education plan, they will contact the family and offer the family the opportunity to explain or remedy the plan, the avenue of response outlined in *Charles*. In most such cases, legal intervention is not necessary. Homeschoolers finding themselves in a situation like this can stand their ground and still work successfully with the school system without the aid of a lawyer (see “Homeschoolers Stand their Ground,” *AHEM News*, v. 1, n. 3, Spring 2004).

Written approval

While many school districts supply homeschoolers with written letters of approval, not all do so. Whether to request written approval is a personal choice. Some parents may feel more comfortable with an approval letter and choose to contact the school to ask for one. There is nothing in the law that requires parents to do so. Once the parents have submitted what *Charles* requires, they have fulfilled their responsibility. If the school disapproves the plan, they must contact the family, not the other way around. It is also true that in practice, many school districts choose not to supply approval letters. One thing parents can do to have documentation that their plan has been received is to request a receipt upon delivery of their home education plans, whether through the mail or in person.

Evaluation and Approval

Depending on the details of the education plan, the family may need to submit a form of evaluation. Evaluation methods are agreed upon during approval, and are part of the approval process. In rare cases, the school may take issue with the family upon receipt of the agreed-upon form of evaluation. If the school deems that the child is not receiving instruction that it is equal to what they would provide, the school may consider that as a factor in approving or disapproving future plans. In such cases, the school may choose to work with the family to remedy the situation (the preferred option). If the family believes they have satisfied the requirement that the instruction they are providing is equal to the school’s, it is the school’s burden to prove that it does not. If the school calls the approval of the plan into question, the school has the right to initiate legal proceedings. But as with prior approval, the school will assume the burden of proof. In practice, this just hasn’t happened.

Mid-year changes

We all know that one of the great benefits of homeschooling is flexibility. Many homeschoolers submit plans that incorporate flexibility, and those plans are approved. In those cases, the school has pre-

approved the option to be flexible with content, and no such change in plans would be subject to prior approval.

Testing

While the *Charles* decision does state that “...the superintendent or school committee may properly require periodic standardized testing...,”⁴ it goes on to say that “Other means of evaluating the progress of the children may be substituted for the formal testing process...”⁵ The court’s main point was that evaluation itself is not unconstitutional and may be required as part of the approval process. It referenced testing specifically (that was the method the family in *Charles* was using), but it made a point of allowing other forms of evaluation, stressing that the method should be agreed upon by the school and the family. The court did not make an unequivocal statement about testing. If a dispute about testing arose between a family and school system, and compromise could not be reached, the school would have to take the family to court and prove that testing was essential to ensuring the state’s interest. It is our view that until such a case goes to court (if it ever does), the question of whether testing can be required as a condition of approval cannot be answered definitively.

Clearly, the state cannot dictate the manner in which we homeschool. When various methods of education are at work, it follows that one method of evaluation for all may not be the best approach. Under *Charles*, parents may work with the schools to determine the method of evaluation that best fits the manner of their homeschooling. And in practice, it does work this way in Massachusetts. Most districts do not require testing, and readily accept alternative means of evaluation.

The Future

While AHEM will continue our work on behalf of Massachusetts homeschoolers, ultimately the most significant and lasting protection for homeschooling rights will come from an informed, educated homeschooling population. Therefore, we urge you to read the court decisions pertinent to homeschooling in Massachusetts. (They and other helpful documents are available on the AHEM website.) In the process, remember that the collective experience of Massachusetts homeschoolers, as well as AHEM’s research, show that the vast majority do not have problems homeschooling in our state.

⁴ *Charles* at 339.

⁵ *Ibid*.

Where Do You Do Schoolwork?

by Joanne Casiello

"Where do you do your schoolwork?" a visiting schooled child once asked my son. My son was perplexed. "Where don't you do your schoolwork?" would have been much easier to answer. From that day forward we taught him to say, "The world is my classroom and life is my teacher." It embodied our philosophy of education, stopped questions and usually made the child's parents decide we were left-over hippies. What follows is the true and complicated answer to the schooled child's question.

While our sons were growing up they each had a desk of their own which was rarely used. In fact, we rarely used tables. We have only recently begun to use chairs. Our kitchen table has a metal top. It can be used as a fireproof bench for Chem lab, but table tops can be a limiting space for projects. When one's feet may be the paintbrush or one's body the canvas a table top is inadequate. Projects and paperwork were usually spread across the floor.

The kitchen floor is an easily washed linoleum where most painting, gluing, sculpting, and wreath making occurs. The living room floor was hardwood that needed to be refinished. I never cringed to hear toy trucks roll across it, physics experiments tumble, or furniture rearranged to create a setting for a play. Once the whole floor was covered by a giant piece of cardboard where our small boys traced the outlines of their bodies then filled in with pictures of their interior anatomy. When we ran out of floor space we went up the walls. One wall of the kitchen was a bulletin board that was simultaneously a time line of World History and a place to dry hand woven baskets. Living room walls (and windows) were for mural painting and map hanging. And of course all rooms were multi-functional.

The 12'x12' computer/sewing/library/trophy room also served as a place to put projects in progress when guests came and we needed to use the living room. Currently what would be the 12'x15' living room on most floor plans does have a sofa and TV but also the full size upright piano, spinet organ, the guitars, trumpets, saxophone, sousaphone, recorders, amplifiers, harmonicas, percussion instruments, shelves of music, microphones, and a video camera. Craft materials are stored in my bedroom on shelves that go from floor to ceiling. The basement is used to do metal and wood work, laundry, bike repair, can be rearranged as a

setting for DVD productions.

At one time, the two youngest boys each built a private cubicle which had their desk, computer (unattached to the Internet), and bureau. As far as I can tell Damon used his to deposit piles of clean laundry. Gabe used his to get away from all of us occasionally and to write in his journal.

The yard had a garden for each child. In the spring the rounded raised beds of varying lengths of freshly turned earth looked suspiciously like new graves and were a source of some apprehension for new neighbors. Also adorning the back yard are a full size soccer net, a volleyball net, a basketball hoop, a tree house, a campfire circle, shitake mushroom logs, and a tire swing. It has had a miniature golf course, a tiny framed clubhouse, holes to China, prayer places, obstacle courses, pitch backs, swing sets, snow sculptures, a sandbox big enough to bury a brother in, a dog run, and recycled junk sculptures. Not too long ago it was the setting for the scene from the fifth act of Hamlet where everyone dies.

The driveway was for learning to ride two wheeled bikes, practicing writing the alphabet in chalk, setting up a big wheel car wash, yard sales, spray painting picnic tables, and learning to change the oil on your truck. Learning took place in every nook and cranny of our home, our yard, our car and spilled over into the rest of the world. So, schooled child, where do we do our schoolwork? Wherever we live and breathe, we learn.

Send Joanne your question about homeschooling. Either email info@ahem.info with Attn: Joanne in the subject field, or write to Joanne, c/o AHM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474.

Around AHM . . .

PhotoWalks www.photowalks.com

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts is planning a *Photowalk* of the **Boston Public Garden** for ages 12 and up on **Friday, May 11th, 2007** at **11:00 AM**. We will meet at 10:45 AM near the Public Garden – specific info on where to meet will be sent once you register.

PhotoWalks offers guided walking tours of Boston presented with historic commentary and creative photography tips.

Discover Boston's fascinating history and capture amazing pictures of its famous landmarks. Learn *how to see creatively* on a photo tour! The



Public Garden in Boston transformed from a swamp to become the first public botanical garden in America. Today, its visual splendor captivates locals and visitors alike. Create your own “postcards of Boston” and learn how to capture creative photographs of the colorful flowerbeds, statues, fountains and the legendary Swan Boats. The Public Garden’s meandering pathways eventually lead us to Acorn Street and Louisburg Square in Beacon Hill. This PhotoWalks tour is presented with historic commentary and photography tips for taking creative pictures of the Public Garden and a small part of Beacon Hill. Tour is approximately 90 minutes long.

PhotoWalks has received rave reviews since its launch in 2002 and has been recognized in numerous publications and TV segments: *The Boston Globe*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and WCVB-TV’s *Chronicle*. The Editors of *Yankee Magazine Travel Guide to New England* named PhotoWalks a Must-See Destination in Boston.

Cost: \$15.00 per student age 12-17; \$20.00 per adult (18+). Students ages 8 – 11 can join the tour for \$8 each, but must be accompanied by paying adult(s).

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 names and 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 April 27th**. No refunds after April 27th. Email FieldTrips@AHEM.info for more information or call 781-641-0566.

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

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.

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. 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.

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!

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, 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.

To become a Friend of AHEM, send your name and address to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474, or email info@AHEM.info. It’s free!

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