

Current State Issues . . .

Legislative Watch

House Bill 1220

HB 1220, 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 description of the bill in the House Docket 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;
- require the state to pay for the administration of the test;
- require schools to award diplomas to homeschoolers who pass MCAS;
- allow schools to offer “remedial” help for homeschoolers who “fail... to meet the requirements of the competency determination;”

The above is what we know about the bill. In reading it, 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.

And:

- 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 *AHEM News*, v. 2, n. 2, Winter 2005.
- **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.

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How to respond

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.

AHEM representatives have been in contact with Rep. Loscocco and his staff to voice our concerns about the bill. We also hand delivered letters to members of the Education committee, detailing our concerns. The Education committee may soon schedule a public hearing on this bill. We will notify Friends of AHEM with email as soon as a date is set.

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.

Text of HB1220

SECTION 1: Section 1I of chapter 69 of the general laws, as appearing in the 2000 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>

AHEM's letter to the Education committee March 24, 2005

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 are writing to you regarding House Bill 1220, filed by Rep. Paul Loscocco (Republican – Eighth Middlesex), which has been referred to the Joint committee on Education.

In Massachusetts homeschooling is governed by case law, in conjunction with applicable statutes. The most important case is *Care and Protection of Charles & others*, 399 Mass. 324 (1987). In this case, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts upheld the compulsory attendance statute, General Laws Chapter 76, Section 1: "Every child between the minimum and maximum ages established for school attendance by the board of education, ... shall, subject to section fifteen, attend a public day school in said town, or some other day school approved by the school committee, ... but such

attendance shall not be required of a child ... who is being otherwise instructed in a manner approved in advance by the superintendent or the school committee." Homeschoolers are "otherwise instructed." In its decision, the Court was aware of the need to balance two basic tenets – the constitutional right of the parents to homeschool and the state's interest in the education of its citizenry. The result was delegation of homeschooling oversight to local school districts. Each city or town has discretion in determining how to conduct oversight.

HB 1220 would amend Section 1I of chapter 69 of the general laws. It would:

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

We have a variety of concerns about the bill:

- HB 1220 places an administrative and fiscal burden on the public schools to "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..." There are also costs involved with the acquisition, distribution, and administration of the test, and the collection and maintenance of test results.
- 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 these frameworks. Using a test that was created for these very specific purposes as a hoop to jump through to be issued a diploma from a school the student did not actually attend does not remotely relate to the intent and purpose of the test.
- 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. (Prior to the graduation requirement that students achieve a passing score on the 10th grade MCAS, the decision to issue diplomas to homeschoolers was left to the discretion of local school districts.) We are concerned that this requirement could create administrative confusion for homeschoolers and school officials. The possibility that homeschoolers might opt to take the MCAS and thereby become eligible for a public high school diploma might cause schools to feel pressure to make homeschoolers' curricula conform to that of the public schools, thereby impinging on our freedom to individualize educational methods and approaches for our children, one of the primary reasons we choose to homeschool, and a right that is guaranteed in Massachusetts case law governing homeschooling. (*Charles* at 339) Also, would requiring schools to issue diplomas based solely on passing MCAS render local graduation requirements meaningless?

- 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?

While this bill does not directly address the issue of private and parochial school students' eligibility for the Adams Scholarships, it would remove the current obstacle of them not being allowed to take the MCAS. One way to address the scholarship eligibility issue that would avoid the confusing elements of this bill, would be to change the eligibility requirement for the Adams Scholarship from the MCAS to the SAT or other test or GPA that is not based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, thereby leveling the playing field for all students in Massachusetts, public, private, or otherwise instructed. (See Georgia's HOPE Scholarship www.gsfc.org/HOPE/index.cfm.)

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. In cases where diplomas are required, 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. As parents who have chosen to “otherwise educate” our children, we feel this bill is unnecessary. 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 and flexibility that homeschooling allows us and our children. We are able to do what works best for our children because we do not have the restrictions of public school. We respect that the MCAS tests were developed for a specific purpose, one that is beyond the scope of homeschooling.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our opinion. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

House Bill 1220 Update

On May 5th, 2005 a public hearing to afford citizens, legislators and lobbyists the opportunity to express their views, was held on House Bill 1220, which would allow homeschoolers to take the MCAS at state expense, and require schools to award diplomas to homeschoolers who pass MCAS and request a diploma.

The researcher at the Education Committee told us a woman and her daughter were the only two people to testify at the public hearing. The bill was also mentioned by a few other people as they spoke in support or opposition to other bills that day. Researchers are now going through the written testimony that has been submitted and sorting that out to be included in the official record.

There is no executive session scheduled yet for this bill. The executive session is for the committee to review the public testimony and discuss the merits of the bill before making their recommendations to the full membership of the House. The committee then issues its report, recommending that a bill “ought to pass” or “ought not to pass” and the report is submitted to the Clerk’s office. An “executive” session in the legislature is not private. The public may observe, but not participate in, these meetings. (Information on how the legislative process in Massachusetts work is taken from <http://www.mass.gov/legis/lawmkng.htm>.)

If you didn’t express an opinion on this bill but now wish you had, it is not too late to email or call your own representatives and the chairs of the Education committee. See <http://www.ahem.info/HB1220.htm>.

Senate Bill 1907- An Act Providing for the Denial of Driver’s Licenses to Truants

SB 1907, filed by Senator Hart (Democrat - First Suffolk), Senator Brown (Republican - Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex), Rep. Canavan (Democrat - Tenth Plymouth) and Rep. Fallon (Democrat - Thirty-third Middlesex), would require that all applicants for driver’s licenses, between the ages of 16 – 18, provide a letter from school officials certifying that the applicant is enrolled in school and is meeting all academic and attendance requirements, or has received a high school diploma or certificate, or GED, . . . or “is enrolled in a home education program that satisfies the requirements of all state laws governing such courses.”

One problem is that this bill mentions “home education,” a phrase not found elsewhere in Massachusetts law. Should the bill go any further, to avoid confusion, “is enrolled in a home education program” should be changed to the term found in the compulsory attendance statute, “is otherwise instructed...”

There is no applicable state law governing the home education of a young adult who reaches the age of sixteen: Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 76, sec. 1, the compulsory attendance statute, no longer applies. Chapter 76, Sec. 1 provides that all children between the ages of six and sixteen attend school. Following the guidelines set down in the *Charles* decision (1987), schools may require parents of otherwise instructed students between the ages of six and sixteen to submit educational plans for their children. Once an otherwise instructed student reaches the age of sixteen, parents are not required to seek the approval of school authorities. In fact, there are some school departments that will not approve home education plans for homeschoolers who have reached the age of 16.

If passed, this bill would put homeschoolers between the ages of 16 – 18 who want to get a driver’s license in an unusual position; these teen homeschoolers would need to pass the GED, or provide certification from their school committee that they are “enrolled in a home education program that satisfies the requirements of all state laws...” before being granted a driver’s license or a learner’s permit, an oxymoron because state law does not require them to be enrolled in a home education program.

Senate Bill 1907 is most likely an ineffective measure to discourage truancy, (and furthermore students in this age group are not legally truant). Research has shown that withholding a driver’s license has not kept students

in school or motivated them to work harder. This bill will burden schools with cumbersome administrative tasks and record keeping at a time of budgetary restraints as well as cause an undue hardship to a category of young adults that are home educated but do not by any means meet the standard of “truant” or “drop out.”

A similar bill, SB 1321, was filed in 2003. At that time, AHEM contacted all members of the committee on Public Safety to make our concerns known. That bill died in committee. This new piece of legislation, SB 1907, has been referred to the Joint Committee on Transportation. Because of the potential impact on homeschoolers, AHEM has contacted the sponsors of this bill, making our concerns known. We will keep you informed of any activity regarding this bill.

Partial Text of SB 1970

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE DENIAL OF DRIVER LICENSES TO TRUANTS

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.

Chapter 90 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after section 8L the following section:-

Section 8M. The application for a license to operate a motor vehicle or for a junior operator’s license or a learner’s permit shall be signed by a parent or guardian, or by another responsible adult, if there is no parent or guardian and such signature shall be notarized. The registrar may issue said license or permit if the applicant provides certification from his school committee that said applicant:

- (1) has received a high school diploma, a high school general educational development (GED) equivalency diploma, a special diploma, or a certificate of high school completion;
- (2) is enrolled in a public or private school and satisfies relevant attendance and academic requirements;
- (3) is enrolled in a study course in preparation for the test of general educational development and satisfies relevant attendance requirements;
- (4) is enrolled in a home education program that satisfies the requirements of all state laws governing such courses;...

The bill continues. The full text of the bill can be found at www.mass.gov/legis/bills/senate/st01/st01907.htm

National Scene . . .

National Merit® Scholarship Program

What would we do without our Friends? It’s a two way street, keeping each other informed and up-to-date. For instance, recently a Friend wrote with a question we didn’t know the answer to, and ended up answering it himself, to the benefit of all of us.

The National Merit® Scholarship Program is an academic competition for recognition and scholarships that began in 1955. High school students enter the National Merit Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) — a test which serves as an initial screen of approximately 1.3 million entrants each year — and by meeting published program entry/participation requirements.

Most of us have heard of homeschoolers being awarded National Merit Scholarships. Case in point is this article from the Chicago Sun-Times: <http://www.suntimes.com/output/education/cst-nws-home29.html>.

But to participate in the National Merit® Scholarship Program, a student must “be enrolled full time as a high school student, progressing normally toward graduation or completion of high school, and planning to enroll full time in college no later than the fall following completion of high school.”

When faced with question 13a of the PSAT/NMSQT Answer Sheet, “Are you enrolled as a full-time high school student?” what should homeschoolers answer? In fact, a homeschooled student is considered to be a “high school student” for the purposes of this question and should answer “Yes.”

http://www.nationalmerit.org/answer_sheet.pdf

Answering “No” disqualifies a student from participation in the Merit Scholarship program. If a student mistakenly answers “No,” the National Merit Scholarship Corporation says that a letter from parents to verify homeschooled status will restore eligibility for the scholarship program.

Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers . . .

Gymnactivist!

My name is Dominique A. and I am eight and a half years old. I live in Watertown, Massachusetts and I really like homeschooling. My favorite things are

reading books, science, cooking, computers, and double especially – gymnastics.

I help the Watertown library a lot and I started a Junior Friends club. To help the library, we have fundraisers for the new building and we have parties for holidays and the librarians' birthdays. Because they think I'm cute, the librarians asked me to speak at their big groundbreaking ceremony for the new building. I did an awesome story using my stuffed animals as props. It was about how each of the librarians come together to make something special... the library. One of our town councilors was there and she thought my speech was so interesting that she offered to take me into the State House to meet the Lieutenant Governor.

Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey was super nice and she was wearing a beautiful aqua suit. She showed me her office and she told me about her daughter's pet doves. I made her a card with a fancy sacred cod on it and she was impressed that an eight-year-old knew about the sacred cod. I sat in the Governor's Council meeting and met Chris Iannella, who I recognized from television ads because he's a personal injury lawyer. He actually gave me five dollars for the library. It was a fun day.

My most favorite thing in the world is gymnastics. I am competing at level four. My best event is uneven bars and it's my favorite. I have five teammates, two head-coaches, and four helper-coaches. I love front aerials. At my second competition, I got fifth place all around and got a big trophy. I got medals for fifth place on vault, sixth place on balance beam, and eighth place on uneven bars. I think gymnastics is fun because I get to twirl, twist, and meet gymnasts who are better than me so I can learn what I will be able to do if I work hard. The girls on my gymnastics team are fabulous and are really nice to me. I like them soooooooooo much. Bye !

Around AHEM . . .

Faces at AHEM

Deb Bermudes lives in Arlington with her husband, Peter, and their two children. She has been homeschooling, or rather un-schooling, in Massachusetts for seven years. Deb believes that children simply learn, especially when they are able to follow their interests. In addition to parenting and helping AHEM, Deb works as an occupational therapist with children with sensory integration issues, provides craniosacral therapy and reiki treatments for adults and children, and teaches infant massage to parents. Deb has been a long time advocate for parental rights and empowering parents to

be their own best experts. She and her husband founded and maintain the organization Massachusetts Citizens for Vaccination Choice, which encourages and supports parents in making informed vaccination decisions for their children and believes that these decisions need to rest with parents – not “professionals.”

Home Education Day at the State House - Monday, April 25, 2005

On Monday, April 25, 2005, Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts is sponsoring Home Education Day at the State House. Homeschoolers from all over the state will tour the State House, learn about state government, and meet and share with legislators the activities, accomplishments, and diversity of Massachusetts homeschoolers. It is shaping up to be an exciting day of learning, fun, and networking. We hope you'll be part of it!

In order to encourage as many homeschoolers from around the state as possible to be a part of the day, we've outlined how you can turn this excursion into a mini-vacation to the historic Lexington-Concord area, crowned by a visit to the State House and Boston, and tailored to your family's individual tastes and needs. Late April is a beautiful time of year to explore the historic towns of Lexington, Concord, and Arlington, as well as the City of Boston (imagine the blooms in the Public Garden!) For all the details, including optional field trip add-ons (space for these is limited), other area attractions, the hotel, the MBTA, and links to educational materials, allowing you to plan your visit to suit your own style, see www.ahem.info/HED.htm or call 781-641-0566 with adult names, address, and zip code, plus email if available, and phone number. We will then email or mail you a registration packet. **Deadline for registering is April 10.**

In addition to Monday at the State House: Accommodations for out-of-towners

We have arranged for a group rate for people to stay Sunday night, April 24, at Hawthorn Suites, 1 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA, <http://www.hawthorn.com/>. This hotel has easy MBTA access to downtown. To book at special rates, call 781-643-7258 **before April 10**. Specify name of group: “Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts (AHEM).” Special rate will be applied. The hotel advises us that rooms are filling up fast so call as soon as possible, and by April 10th at the latest.

Sunday evening entertainment

Kick up your heels, clap your hands, or just listen as we do-si-do in traditional New England contra, square, and folk dances. Inexperienced? Don't worry. Dances will be geared to beginners and families. Don't like to dance? Come watch, listen, and socialize with other homeschoolers from around the state in an informal, relaxed, fun setting. Delicious goodies will be for sale to benefit AHEM. Free with pre-registration; \$5 at the door, \$10 family maximum. At the Senior Center, 20 Academy St., Arlington center (one block off Mass. Ave at Maple St.). (*Location may change—check with us before going.*)

And don't forget displays!

We want to showcase the achievements, activities, lifestyles, accomplishments, and diversity of Massachusetts homeschoolers.

The list below represents suggestions and ideas and does not preclude submission of other appropriate items. Exhibits will be broken down into the following categories:

- Sports: individual and team sports, homeschool teams, town teams, elite leagues.
- Fine Arts: Visual arts, dance, music, theater, creative writing.
- College/Academics: Awards, portfolios, acceptance letters.
- Civic Involvement: Volunteerism, internships, community service.
- Support Groups: Newsletters, photos/descriptions of activities.

Another simple and effective way to participate in the displays is to create a submission for Massachusetts homeschoolers albums. To have a page in one of these albums, submit a flat, 8.5 x 11" page with a one-inch left-hand margin. Adorn your page with photographs, drawings, calligraphy, collage, or any other representation of you and/or your homeschooling life. Your page might describe your accomplishments, explain what homeschooling means to you, discuss the challenges and rewards of homeschooling, or anything else you'd like to share about homeschooling.

While AHEM would love to display every item we receive, there are space limitations. We will do our best to represent the full spectrum of submissions. Unfortunately, we cannot return display items, so send only things you can part with, or make copies.

The displays are intended to promote education and awareness of homeschooling families and grassroots

activities in the state. Advertisements or information relating to businesses will not be accepted for display.

For more information about submitting, email info@ahem.info or call 781-648-5579.

Museum of Science Omni Movie

Migration is a natural phenomenon that stirs curiosity in the mind... and wonder in the soul. Witness the remarkable passages of creatures from gray whales to monarch butterflies at the Omni movie "*Amazing Journeys*" on **Monday, May 16th, 2005**. In *Amazing Journeys*, travel by sky, sea, and land alongside butterflies, whales, zebras, birds, and crabs as each species undertakes a unique migratory journey. Suggested age is K-12 and duration is 45 minutes.

We will meet in the main lobby at 2:30 PM for the show at 3:00 PM at the Museum of Science in Boston. If you wish to spend more time in the Museum you can meet Amy in the main lobby at 12:30 PM.

Teachers (one per family) are \$3.00 and students and everyone else (second adults from same family) are \$6.25. Children under two sitting on a lap are free. (This multiple visit rate assumes you have visited the museum on your own or with a field trip at least once since September 1st, 2004. If you haven't visited this school year your price is \$3.00 per 1st adult in a family and \$9.50 for all others, students included.) This price is for the Omni movie and exhibit halls until closing at 5:00 PM. Parking is \$3.00 per car payable to the museum on the day of your visit.

To sign up please send a check along with your name, email address and number of adults/children attending made out to Amy Davies to 41 Traincroft, Medford, MA 02155. **Deadline for receipt of checks is May 6th.** No late checks will be accepted. No refunds after May 6th. For more information check out www.mos.org or email Amy at amjo41@earthlink.net or call 781-393-8285.

AHEM membership cards valid for "Educator Appreciation Weekend" at Borders Books & Music stores

Borders Books & Music stores will honor educators for their hard work and dedication during "Educator Appreciation Weekend," Friday, April 15th to Sunday April 17th. Each store will offer educators a 25% discount on regularly priced gift items, books and music and a 15% discount on regularly priced DVDs – including items not intended for classroom use.

During “Educator Appreciation Weekend” teachers, librarians, principals, homeschooling parents and other educators can stop by their local Borders or Waldenbooks to enjoy discounts on thousands of books, CDs, and videos/DVDs to use in their classrooms or for personal enjoyment. Borders will also treat them to a 25% discount on all food and beverage items from Cafe© Borders during the weekend.

Special reception at Borders stores Friday, April 15, 4:00 - 8:00 pm. Food, fun, & prizes! Contact your local store for details. Additional event information can be found at www.bordersstores.com/educator.

AHEM has confirmed that AHEM membership cards are valid proof of educator status for the purpose of obtaining the discounts during “Educator Appreciation Weekend.” If you would like an AHEM membership card, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Indicate “membership card” on the envelope, and allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. People requesting cards will be added to the Friends of AHEM list unless they specifically opt out, so please include your email address as well if you have one, as that is our preferred form of communication.

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. SASEs are appreciated.

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