

Tips for Making the Decision to Homeschool

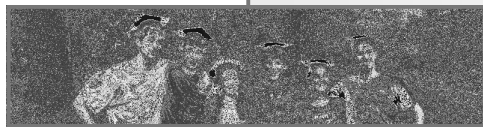
READ some of the recommended books on homeschooling. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF with homeschooling regulations in Massachusetts – a summary is to the right. More details can be found on our website www.AHEM.info. TALK to active homeschoolers. MEET some through a local support group. You can find a support group on our website, as well as a calendar of homeschooling events. You can also JOIN online homeschooling networks to ask questions, get support, or just lurk. BECOME a Friend of AHEM.

Recommended Books

- ◆ *Dumbing Us Down* by John Taylor Gatto
- ◆ *Family Matters* by David Guterson
- ◆ *College Without High School* by Blake Boles
- ◆ *The Homeschooling Book of Answers*, Linda Dobson, ed.
- ◆ *How Children Fail* by John Holt
- ◆ *Learning All the Time* by John Holt
- ◆ *Teach Your Own: The John Holt Book of Homeschooling* by John Holt & Patrick Farenga
- ◆ *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* by Grace Llewellyn

Internet

- ◆ Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc. (AHEM) <http://www.ahem.info>
- ◆ Massachusetts homeschoolers' discussion list <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MAhomeschoolers/>



Massachusetts Homeschool Guidelines

SCHOOL AUTHORITY OVERSIGHT

Oversight of home education is a local function in Massachusetts. Because there are nearly as many ways to homeschool as there are homeschooling families, local oversight enables school authorities to exercise discretion and flexibility in evaluating home education plans and student progress. In using their oversight function, school authorities may ask for certain types of information (elaborated below), but they must remember the limits established to protect parents' rights in determining how their children will be educated.

"...the approval of a home school proposal must not be conditioned on requirements that are not essential to the State interest in assuring that 'all the children shall be educated.'" (Charles)

"...the State...cannot apply institutional standards to this non-institutionalized setting." (Brunelle)



The courts have emphasized consistently that parents and school authorities should proceed cooperatively to "expedite approval." (*Charles, Searles, Ivan*) In cases where differences cannot be resolved cooperatively, the school authority assumes the burden of proof in any subsequent legal proceedings.

Parents are responsible for giving prior notification to school authorities of their home education plan,* which must equal the local public school's "in thoroughness and efficiency." (*Charles*) Parents must comply with an evaluation program mutually agreed upon by school and parents.

APPROVAL AND EVALUATION

Parental Qualifications

School officials may ask for information regarding "qualifications of the parent or parents who will be instructing the children," (*Charles*) but the parents are not required to have any specific educational credentials. "General Laws c. 71, Sec. 1, provides that teachers shall be 'of competent ability and good morals.'" (*Charles*)

Subjects and Hours

School officials may inquire about subjects the child will study, length of the home-school year, and hours of instruction in each subject. While school officials may consider hours of instruction in each subject, they may not dictate the manner in which the subjects will be taught. (*Charles*) In practice this means that parents may calculate hours of instruction based on the manner in which they homeschool, which does not have to replicate the public school's offering, only equal it in "thoroughness and efficiency." Additionally, following a schedule is not an important consideration in a home school where "...the perception and use of time... are different." (*Brunelle*)

Teaching Materials

School officials may identify teaching materials, but "only to determine subject and grade level... school officials may not... use this access to dictate the manner in which the subjects will be taught." (*Charles*) The *Brunelle* court pointed out that "...some of the most effective curricular materials... may not be tangible. For example, travel, community service, visits to educationally enriching facilities and places, and meeting with various resource people, can provide important learning experiences apart from the four corners of a text or workbook." (*Brunelle*)

Evaluation

School officials and parents should agree on a method of evaluation that may include one of the following approaches: standardized testing, periodic progress report, or dated work samples. Home visits may not be required as a condition of approval.

**Tips for writing your education plan, including a sample education plan and progress reports, can be found on our website.*



Become a Friend of AHEM

Friends of AHEM keep abreast of legislative and other issues that affect Massachusetts homeschoolers via an announcement-only email list. Becoming a Friend of AHEM is an easy step to becoming proactive. Even if your involvement is simply to stay informed, that strengthens all of us.

Email info@AHEM.info with your name, address, town, and zip code. Friends of AHEM with email get special notice of AHEM events, field trips, and get-togethers. If you would like to become a Friend of AHEM and receive *AHEM News* by US mail instead of email updates, send your name, address, town, and zip code to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Donations to offset cost are appreciated! AHEM respects your privacy and will not share your name or contact information with any other organization.

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.

Donate to AHEM

Contributions to support our work are greatly appreciated. Please make checks payable to "Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc." and send them to the following address:

AHEM
PO Box 1307
Arlington, MA 02474

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

About www.AHEM.info

Help for Homeschooling in Massachusetts

Walkthrough for making the decision and getting started homeschooling
Background information about homeschooling in Massachusetts

Tips for writing your education plan, including a sample education plan and progress reports
Key Massachusetts documents
(*Charles, Brunelle, Chapter 76*)

MIAA guidelines for homeschoolers' participation in interscholastic athletics

Support

Telephone help
Local support group listings
Beyond homeschooling — college & alternatives
Libraries and homeschoolers

Information

Legislative updates
AHEM questionnaire and database on MA homeschool policies and practices
Information on connecting with elected officials
Educators' discounts
Archives, including AHEM newsletters

Fun!

Field trips
Event calendar
Inspiring stories about MA homeschoolers
Unit Study on MA History & Government
Exploring Massachusetts page
Fiction by and featuring homeschoolers

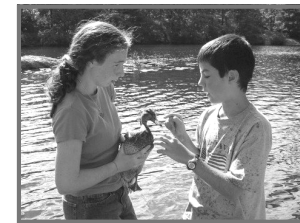
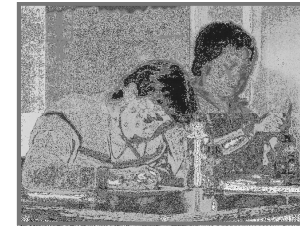
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Getting Started Homeschooling

Welcome to homeschooling!



The Department of Education estimates there were about 1.5 million home-schooled students in the United States in 2007, the most recent year for which data is provided. Home-schooling is being adopted by a broader range of families than ever before. Families choose to home-school for many different reasons: educational, religious, or simply because they enjoy being with their children. Each family is unique, each child is unique. Take the time to discover what works for you and your child; flexibility is key.