

**BEST UPDATE - January 10, 2005**  
**Business and Education for Schools and Technology**

**PLEASE CONTACT LEGISLATORS TO SUPPORT WIRELESS LEARNING**

Please help to bring state support for wireless learning to Massachusetts schools. Contact your state representative and senator and ask them to speak with members of the Education Committee in support of HB.1219 and the general effort to move forward with one-to-one wireless learning in all schools.

A hearing before the Joint Committee on Education will consider testimony about HB.1219 on January 31, starting at 1 p.m. in room B-2 at the State House. HB.1219 would bring wireless learning devices to every teacher and student in 15 middle schools around the state over several years. This would be in preparation for a statewide wireless learning initiative. The bill's legislative supporters tell us they and the education committee need to hear from constituents supportive of the idea. (See HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS below.)

The amendments proposed by BEST have made this bill attractive by adding requirements for better professional development, maintenance, technical and instructional support, and coordination. They also reduce the local financial commitment to make the effort more reasonable.

Several other states have these initiatives - ME, TX, FL, VA, MI, MO -- all have dramatically improved student engagement in learning, attendance, and have nearly wiped out discipline problems. Many have shown positive test results on writing. Those that focused on content learning improvement have made achievement gains. Please see [www.best-edtech.org](http://www.best-edtech.org) for more details.

As you know, educating students for their future means giving them and their teachers not just basic skills, but 21st century skills, e.g. how to organize resources; acquire, evaluate and use information; understand complex systems and their relationships; collaborate with others; work with a variety of technologies; and analyze and solve problems. To teach these, we need to be able to provide content and interdisciplinary project-based learning experiences that reach well beyond the classroom walls.

With the outdated technology in many schools and the lack of support for both teachers and technology, this has been difficult to do. The bill would help you provide what you know your students

need. It would also wipe out the digital divide, providing a leg up for economically disadvantaged students.

Both college and careers require students to be fluent and efficient in their use of computers and of the resources of the Internet. Falling behind other states is not an option Massachusetts can afford.

The bill only would fund 15 wireless learning projects around the state, but it would pave the way to a more universal initiative. Do NOT assume we are talking about Governor Romney's idea to use the cheap MIT-designed computer -- this is more of an alternative proposal.

### **HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR**

Most important now are contacts from local constituents to members of the education committee and members of leadership. The chairs of the committee are Sen. Robert Antonioni (Robert.Antonioni@state.ma.us 617-722-1230) and Rep. Patricia Haddad (Rep.PatriciaHaddad@Hou.State.MA.US 617-722-2070). Senator Antonioni's school districts include Nashoba, Ashburnham-Westminster, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Lunenburg, North Middlesex, and Wachusett. Rep. Haddad's districts are Dighton-Rehoboth, Somerset, and Taunton. Both chairs are supportive but need to hear from people in their districts.

The primary sponsors of the bill are Reps. Lida Harkins and Dan Bosley in the House and Sen. Andrea Nuciforo in the Senate.

At the end of this message is a full list of the school districts whose legislators serve on the education committee -- please look for yours. You can find out your legislator's e-mail address on the web at <http://www.state.ma.us/legis>

Meanwhile, here's an idea of what you might say:

#### **Sample message for school people to deliver to legislators:**

"I am writing (calling) to urge you to contact members of the Joint Committee on Education regarding H.1219, the Massachusetts Wireless Learning Initiative which will be heard January 31.

“This bill would support projects in 15 middle schools using one-to-one wireless devices to prepare students for their future. Similar projects in our state and around the country have shown how this intervention increases motivation and attendance, decreases discipline problems, improves student writing scores, and moves students toward becoming more independent learners.

“There is a proposed revision to the bill (see [www.best-edtech.org](http://www.best-edtech.org)) that would strengthen it substantially by improving technical and instructional support, professional development and mentoring for teachers, maintenance, statewide coordination, and the financing mechanisms. I hope you will urge the committee to adopt these suggestions from BEST.

“In our schools, (add info about your tech program; perhaps invite the legislator to visit).

“Thank you for your help with this matter,”

A full list of school districts that are represented by members of the education committee can be found at [www.best-edtech.org](http://www.best-edtech.org); look for School districts in Education Committee members' districts

**BEST COORDINATORS:**

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**NEXT MEETING:** January 13, 8 - 9:30 a.m. in the Cafe at 200 Fifth Ave., Waltham. Please call if you decide to attend.

**B.E.S.T. - Business and Education for Schools and Technology.**  
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