



January 30, 2006

The Honorable Robert A. Antonioni
The Honorable Patricia A. Haddad
Joint Chairs, Committee on Education - State House
Boston, MA 02133

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Dear Senator Antonioni and Representative Haddad:

Please support wireless learning in Massachusetts schools through House Bill 1219. I am writing on behalf of the members of Massachusetts Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. MASCD serves instructional and curriculum leaders in all roles: school and college teachers, department heads and directors, principals, superintendents and other educators. We are the state affiliate of ASCD, a non-partisan, non-union, worldwide community of over 170,000 educators, advocating sound policies and sharing best practices for the success of each learner. We are also a member of the BEST coalition (Business and Education for Schools and Technology).

In my early years as high school principal twenty years ago, I had the privilege of working with two teachers who received the first awards from Apple Computer for their innovative instructional approaches. I know first-hand the power of project-based learning, and I know that the resources available to students today with computers provide even more powerful learning opportunities than even a year or two ago.

House Bill 1219 would support content and interdisciplinary project-based learning in 15 middle schools using one-to-one wireless computers. The projects would help students – and their teachers – acquire 21st century skills. All students, not just those who are economically advantaged, need to learn how to organize resources; acquire, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources; understand complex systems and their relationships; collaborate with others; and analyze and solve problems. The best way for students to acquire these skills is in real-life contexts that computer-based projects can provide.

Similar initiatives in our state and around the country have shown how the wireless computing proposed in House 1219 increases student motivation and attendance, decreases discipline problems, improves writing scores, and moves students toward becoming more independent learners.

It is also critical to provide the infrastructure to support this initiative. For example, improving technical and instructional support, providing professional development and mentoring for teachers, insuring adequate maintenance, statewide coordination and financing are as important to the project as the computers.

The outdated technology in many schools and the lack of support for both teachers and technology have made it difficult to realize the potential of wireless computing. This bill would help provide what you, and we, know that students need. Please support House Bill 1219.

Sincerely,

Mary Forte Hayes
Executive Director