

## **SCHOOL DISTRICT LEGAL STATUS**

Massachusetts has the oldest public school system in the nation dating back to 1647, the laws of the Massachusetts Bay Colony required towns to provide for a program of public education.

The Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, in a statement of principle dealing with schools, reads as follows:

"Wisdom, and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them; especially the University at Cambridge, public schools and grammar schools in the towns.... (Part II, Chapter V, Section II)

The legislature has extended authority for conducting public schools to the respective towns and school districts, requiring that "every town shall maintain.. a sufficient number of schools for the instruction of all children who may legally attend a public school therein." (Massachusetts General Laws 71:1)

The public education system of Arlington structurally is a department of the town operated under laws pertaining to education and under regulations of the Massachusetts Board of Education. The area served by the Arlington Public Schools is contiguous with the Town of Arlington.

LEGAL REFS:           Constitution of Massachusetts, Part II, Chapter V, Section II  
                          M.G.L. 71:1

CROSS REF.:           BB, School Committee Legal Status