

Keystone

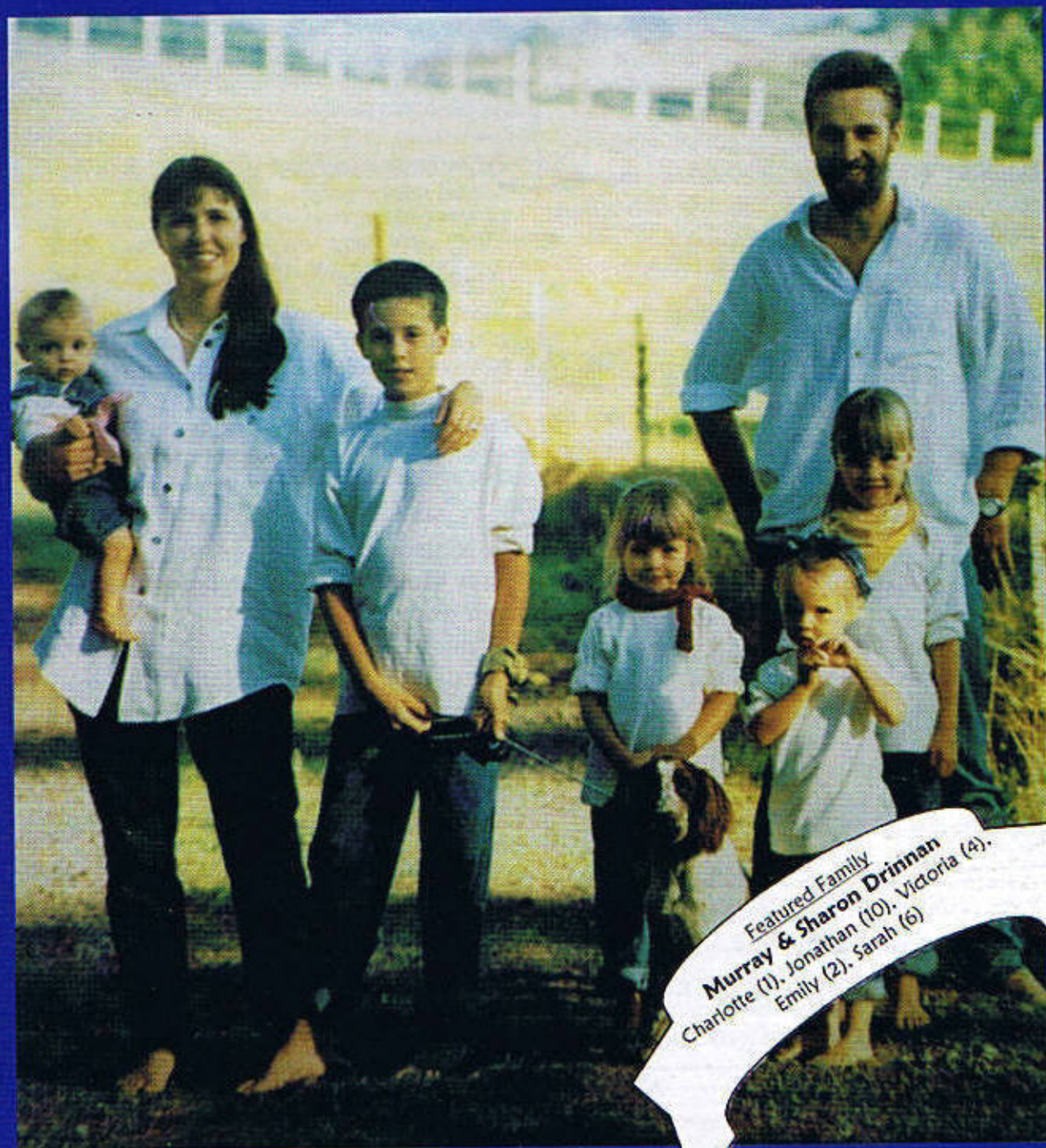
The Journal of Christian Home Schoolers

of New Zealand

Vol. VI No. 1

January 2000

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in his commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth. — Psalm 112:1-2



Featured Family

Murray & Sharon Drinnan

Charlotte (1), Jonathan (10), Victoria (4),
Emily (2), Sarah (6)

KEYSTONE

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Christian Home Schoolers of New Zealand.
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Keystone correspondence to:

Craig S. Smith, Editor
4 Tawa St.
Palmerston North, 5301
New Zealand
Ph.: +64 6 357-4399
Fax: +64 6 357-4389
E-mail: keystone.teach@xtra.co.nz

KEYSTONE is the journal of Christian Home Schoolers of New Zealand, a part of the Home Education Foundation, a Charitable Trust established to promote the concept of home education to the Christian community and beyond.

KEYSTONE is intended to inform, challenge, encourage and inspire. The Christian faith is being undervalued. Christianity alone is fully able to present a world view that is comprehensive, coherent, consistent and complete.

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*The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of wisdom,
a good understanding have all those
who do His commandments.
— Psalm 111:10*

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Home Education Family Cottage Industries

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It was Henry R. Van Til, in The Calvinistic Concept of Culture (1959) who stated that "culture" is religion externalised. Look at the expressions of our culture today: hatred, violence, murder, infanticide, anti-Christianity, immorality, drugs and other crimes. The religion, the faith which our popular culture externalises is demonic.

**Oh, Lord, please give us the wisdom and vision to home educate our children for Your Glory. May they not only live and work honourably as Christ-like role models in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation but also fearlessly, tirelessly, lovingly offer them Your Words of eternal life.
Amen!**

Editorial



The Good Book says there is no rest for the wicked. I know for a fact that many of us home educating parents wonder from time to time why it is we never seem to get any rest? But of course the Scriptures are talking about a spiritual rest. The Lord commands us to physically rest one day in seven... actually, looking again at that commandment in Exodus 20, the command is actually to work for six days. During our devotions recently we were struck by the tension between “faith” and “works”. Our works cannot save us, but we are saved specifically to do good works. James indicates that our works confirm and validate the fact that we are saved. Now to whom do our works confirm our salvation? The Lord needs no such thing...He knows. It is to ourselves primarily and also to the onlooking believers and unbelievers. “Let your light so shine among men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). I can’t imagine my works causing others to glorify God...I guess that means I am a babe of little experience with much yet to learn in this area of good works. We are told to be zealous for good works, and Ephesians 2:10 says God prepared beforehand a lifetime of good works for us to do. We need to watch out for the emphasis many put on salvation by “faith alone”, which while true is only a step away from thinking the Christian life is also “faith alone” with no works.

Watch out for the Diana Waring tour: Lower North Island from February 7 through 20; South Island in March; North Shore in Auckland on 1 April.

I wanted to wrap up the Year 2000 thing with some interesting facts about time you could teach the children and was amazed at all I found. The material on pages 23 to 26 is only scratching the surface! I found it fascinating. Check out this website for more + links:
<<http://www.tondering.dk/clus/calendar.html>>

The Roundup is on a disturbing topic the Ministry of Justice in considering. Please look into this a bit: if you would like to read my eight-page submission to glean some issues I came up with, I can email it or send me a few stamps and I’ll post a hard copy.

I printed a factual error in a TEACH Bulletin recently. Truth is, Dr Aitken is NOT retiring from the ERO.

Back in December Commissioner for Children Roger McClay called for a ban on spanking. This would be a VERY serious invasion of privacy and a direct challenge to many parents’ sense of duty to their Christian convictions. Fortunately the heat was temporarily removed by a government MP who said they had no plans for that at present as it would simply turn too many good parents into criminals. Amen! Praise the Lord!

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We are supposed to teach “as regular and well as in a registered school”. If that’s all we achieve, I’ll consider ourselves failures.
-- Craig Mortimer, Moerewa

Christian Home Schoolers of NZ Presents:

KEYSTONE, the Journal of CHomeS, which you now hold in your hands!

ChedNet, Christian Home EDucation NETwork Email Discussion Group. Discuss curricula from a Christian worldview, child development from Biblical rather than humanist presuppositions, discipline according to the Biblical pattern and for the Biblical reasons, time management, Christlike character development. Give praise to the Lord for His mercies, blessings and victories! All with like-minded people. Moderated by Craig Smith, National Director of Christian Home Schoolers of NZ since 1986. To subscribe send an email to: chednet@xtra.co.nz

CcedNet, the Christian Classical home EDucation NETwork email discussion group is for those Christian families who would like to train their children to think and not just concentrate on output. A thoroughly Christian, thoroughly Classical education, is one based on the approach known as the

Trivium. Moderated by Barbara Smith, Trustee of Christian Home Schoolers of NZ. To subscribe send an email to: ccednet@xtra.co.nz.

The Home Education Foundation Presents:

TEACH Bulletin (Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home) is a monthly newsletter of the Home Education Foundation. Articles deal with political developments which may affect home educators, statist and professional trends, correspondence with politicians and educationalists, and other items of general interest to home educators. Published since January 1997, **TEACH Bulletin** has been used to sound legislative alerts, rallying home educators to write submissions to their MPs and Parliamentary Select Committees when legislation unfavourable to home educators was introduced into Parliament. The four- to six-page newsletter comes out 11 times a year (none in December) for an annual subscription of \$16 or two years for \$30.

HefNet is the Home Education Foundation's email list discussion group. Established in July 1998, this group has expanded quickly and includes home educators with a wonderfully diverse range of political, religious, philosophical, and methodological views. This mix makes for some red-hot yet edifying debates! Subscription is free by emailing the message "subscribe" to hefnet@xtra.co.nz.

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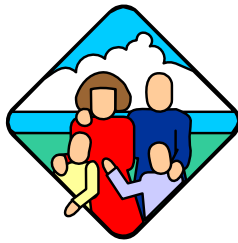
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Feature Family



**Murray & Sharon
Drinnan**
of Manurewa

The image of home schoolers usually conjures up one of two impressions: either religious fanatics or alternate lifestyle hippies. In fact, most are neither. If they're anything like us, they aren't super-mum or -dad or got-it-together-always Christians. They don't have a string of letters after their names or a pile of training under their belts. They are "normal" parents doing a task that takes commitment and hard work, faith and courage. And that's us, Murray and Sharon.

We had thought very little if anything about home schooling until some friends told us all about it. Skeptical, thinking it was a bit off the wall, we didn't take too much notice. But seeds of thought were sown, and God has a way of making things grow. Murray was recommended some books by R.J. Rushdoony and was reading out aloud to Sharon various bits and pieces on a family's responsibility in society as God had ordained it, when we realised that it was our responsibility to ensure that our children's education was Biblically based. Happening concurrently to this, we were concerned about Jonathan's reading progress in school. I remember thinking "God, no! You can't be calling us to this." I wrestled with God about it, wrestled in my mind to comprehend it, and wrestled on the phone with our friends over it! Should we home school? It was the "family-friendliness" of home schooling that drew us. To have time to enjoy each other, share values and do things together. So it was back to our friends and a home school support group to find out how to do it. This was not the easiest thing to find out as everyone did it in a different way! The three main factors that drew us to home schooling were:

- 1) God ordained responsibility
- 2) Family life
- 3) Academics.

So we began. Jonathan was 6 1/2 years, Sarah 17 months, and Sharon was 7 months pregnant. We now have five children aged 2, 4, 6, 7 1/2, and 12 1/2 years. Charlotte, Emily, Victoria, Sarah and Jonathan respectively. (We know: the cover photo's a little dated.) Knowing we were going to have more children, we have used the ACE curriculum well and effectively, supplementing it with projects, poetry, music and creative writing. Recently we have changed our curriculum and are now doing ACE English and spelling, Bob Jones maths, Making Math Meaningful Maths and Diana Waring's History unit studies and our usual music, poetry, Bible, sports, etc., etc. We are now into our seventh year. It hasn't always been easy. In fact, sometimes it's just plain old hard work and determination that keeps us going. But when we surface for air and look at what's been done, and the

fruit in our children, it spurs us along again.

We've learnt a lot. Specifically:

- Chill out Mum, stop and smell the roses.
- Seasons come and seasons go.
- During hard or busy times, doing the basics is OK.
- Discuss curriculum together (the different perspectives is amazing).
- Allow time out, alone and together.
- Be open to change.
- Don't be so serious it loses its joy.
- Belong to a support group.

Home schooling has allowed us many blessings, one of which is the wide and varied bunch of home schoolers we have met. They have challenged us, broadened us, helped us and become our friends. Home schooling has made us think "outside the box", look deeply at our Christian faith and its out-workings and challenged our convictions to go against the "norm". It has given us time with our children.

Murray here: As far as everyday life goes, I work as a production manager in an aluminium joinery factory. I swim three days a week, in the sea if it's fine and tides are right, or in the local pools if not. I head the Men's Ministry and Deacon's Ministry in our church, which is Manukau New Life Centre. I enjoy sports especially rugby and motor racing. I was raised on a dairy farm in Kaukapakapa until my parents split. Then was up north of Dargaville on a sheep farm with my dad and stepmother, then back to Auckland to live with my mum and stepfather.

Sharon here: I am home doing the bulk of our children's education as far as "schooling" goes. I am part of our Ladies' Ministry team and am helping redecorate our church. I co-founded Clevedon Country Home Educators Support Group and help organise and run various activities and outings. I was raised in Auckland and have lived here all my life.

We were saved in 1983 when we were living together. A workmate of Murray's had passed a small pentecostal church on the way home from a pub one Saturday night and decided to go back Sunday morning. He did and got saved. Monday he invited Murray to come with him to the Wednesday night meeting, which he did and got saved. They took me along on Sunday and I got saved. God radically touched and saved our lives. I moved out until we got married nine months later. God has been extremely gracious with His hand of blessing on us and with the work He has done in our hearts.

Jonathan is our book-aholic, reading over one hundred titles this year (1999), reading most of those at least twice. He belongs to the Pioneers Boys Club and enjoys our home school support group sports every Monday. He is learning the piano and loves studying history.

Sarah is our hands-on science buff. She loves collecting all manner of insects and caring for animals. She has a dog and mouse and usually snails, spiders,

weta, etc. She enjoys gardening and any sort of outdoor work. She is learning the recorder at present with plans to progress onto the flute.

Victoria is our creative artist. She loves making pictures, cards and gifts to give to people. She shows great flair in using colour and in her abilities. She is bright and outgoing.

Emily and Charlotte are both normal pre-schoolers, full of life, interest and mischief! Extremely cute!

Nana and Poppa (who live next door, two paddocks away) are our resident support and cheerleaders. They attend craft days, sports, concerts and family concerts, encouraging and praising the children. They are also back-up transport and babysitters, for which we are extremely thankful. (Taking all five children to appointments is not always convenient or stress-free.)

Well, that's us! May the Lord bless you, strengthen you and grant you peace as you continue to serve Him. We leave you with our family motto:
 "As a family we worship God,
 love one another,
 reach others."

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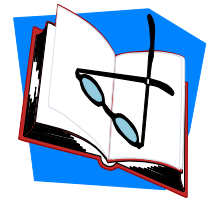
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Book Review



Diana Waring's
Beyond Survival: A Guide to
Abundant-Life Homeschooling
 by
Joanne den Harder, Foxton

A book that both veteran homeschoolers and those just starting out will enjoy. Diana has a very normal family and has a great sense of humour. You'll laugh as she offers practical solutions to everyday circumstances and see yourself as she describes some situations & people.

The first part of the book discusses the "How's, Why's and Wherefor's" of home educating and the different styles of learning and teaching, as well as profiling different families and their approaches. I found this part of the book very interesting, even though I have been homeschooling for a number of years, as I could relate to many of her personal experienced, frustrations and illustrations. My thoughts, as I was reading were: "I really like this woman!"

In the last third of the book, Diana suggests "abundant homeschooling", how to get and keep it. This section talks about our relationship with God and family, the atmosphere in the home and the usual "Blow up the TV" chapter.

This very realistic, practical book will inspire and encourage you as she describes different approaches and makes suggestions for each. The lists of recommended reading at the end of every chapter are also great if you want to go further into any of the suggestions offered.

As one advertiser so eloquently put it, "If you're just getting by with homeschooling, or you've lost that inner joy for what you want to accomplish with your family, I strongly recommend that you read this book!"

In Line with Scripture



The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?
— Jeremiah 17:9

This passage puts a very unpleasant and unpopular message before us. It is telling us something we have all heard before: that at the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.

Now, we are not talking about the band-aid class of problems here. We are talking about a terminal, inoperable cancer type of problem. And it is a problem we all have. Yes, even born again Christians.

You see, we were created good by God in the Garden. But in Adam we all fell into sin. We tend to underestimate the problem of sin, mainly because we have been living in it since conception and are rather more comfortable with it than we would admit. But this sin is a deadly disease with a 100% kill rate. It affects every part of us, giving rise to the doctrinal term “total depravity” which means we humans have been depraved or corrupted in every area, that is, in our total being. (It does not mean every area is as totally depraved as it can possibly be, but until one is converted, one is certainly headed in that direction.) We Christians have been saved from the worst part of this disease, namely, everlasting death in hell, but we will not be free of this disease until we are resurrected to Glory. Meanwhile, the indwelling Holy Spirit gives us an increasing ability to overcome the power of sin in this life, a life-long process known as sanctification.

Implications: we humans are not in a state of normalcy, but are born sick, live with this illness all our days, and only gain deliverance at death. Those lovely people we know who have “hearts of gold” have no such thing. Their hearts are the worst part of them. The Scripture above says the heart is “desperately corrupt”, which is a lot worse than just plain old “corrupt”, which is pretty bad already. Also note: the heart is deceitful.....deceitful above all things, more deceitful than anything else you could mention. Which is why you still think those lovely people DO have hearts of gold, in spite of what the Scripture says. Praise God, not man, for the good deeds done. And praise God that He organises even unregenerate people to do many good deeds.....in spite of their heart conditions.

Our children are not little bundles of innocence....they too have the same deceitful hearts, desperately corrupt. Their cute little eyes and mannerisms will deceive us into thinking otherwise, but we must hold to what Scripture says, not what our deceitful hearts want to tell us. Our job is to give them a proper Biblical “self-esteem”, one that acknowledges this problem. Not surprisingly the world’s idea of self-esteem is just the

opposite: instead of realising you are so depraved that you need a Saviour, you will save yourself by affirming how truly great you are.

It said in the July 13, 1998 issue of *Newsweek* magazine: “If students work in classrooms where posters proclaim WE APPLAUD OURSELVES! and complete sentences like “I am special because....” they will be inoculated against drug use, teen pregnancy, bad grades and just about everything else short of the common cold. Or so the story goes. Parents, like educators, have soaked up the message, trying to make their child feel good about himself no matter how many courses he fails or fly balls he drops.”

However God’s reality has a way of asserting itself as even this *Newsweek* article had to observe: “But now there is evidence that it might be dangerous.... ‘If kids develop unrealistic opinions of themselves and those views are rejected by others,’ warns psychologist Brad Bushman of Iowa State University, the kids are ‘potentially dangerous’....High self-esteem that is unjustified and unstable -- Bushman’s definition of narcissism -- also puts a kid at risk of turning violent.”

We parents must always remember that God has appointed us as parents and mentors of our children: we teach and role model, they learn and emulate. They learn to have a healthy scepticism toward their own hearts by our teaching and by our example. We don’t follow our feelings: we do our duty, which we find written in the pages of Scripture. We men have a particular duty to provide strong leadership here. Having done our duty, God in His grace may well give us the feelings of satisfaction once the job’s well done, or of pride in a child once he’s been disciplined to accomplish things on his own, or of affection toward your wife once you’ve loved her sacrificially, or of respect for your husband once you’ve honoured him sufficiently.

Again, the key to a proper self-esteem is to have a proper — that is, Biblical — self-portrait. We are created in the image of God. But we are fallen and so depraved in every area of our lives (physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual) that we are unable to function as we ought without outside help. We get some help from our parents via discipline — as long as they are not deceived by their hearts to be slack in discipline — and via teaching and example. We also get the spiritual help we need from the Lord via the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. This conversion so thoroughly changes us that we are henceforward enabled to do God’s will and even to desire to do His will over our own. But because sin is still an integral part of our human nature, especially our hearts, that until the day we die we must co-operate with the Holy Spirit in our sanctification, using the Scriptures as our infallible guide rather than the fickle fancies of our deceitful hearts.

Letters



It Is Good Down the Track

We have recently moved to Marton from Wainuiomata after living there for 16 years (except for 2). This has been a big move for us as all our children had jobs where we lived. Marton is a rural town in the Rangitikei, and there are not a lot of jobs. Our children are 19, 18, 16, and 13. Well, we have been here for 4 months and 3 of the children have jobs and one has been accepted to Massey University. My oldest daughter is working with a lovely homeschooling family setting up a tour business. (And the boss tells me she beat all the other applicants by miles even though they held impressive paper qualifications. — Ed.) My 18 year old has been accepted to the first year Veterinary Science Course, and my 16 year old is working in an engineering consultancy firm. She is doing all sorts, from office work to bridge surveying to making cups of tea. My 13 year old son has a relieving paper delivery job (6:00 a. m.) start!!!! I wanted to write to tell people these things, not to brag or be boastful, but to encourage other families that are homeschooling or contemplating homeschooling. We have been homeschooling for 8 years. I can remember in the early days that I worried sometimes what would become of these children, and was I doing them a disservice? But here we are down the track and all is working out for good, even in a small town like Marton. I believe that God has worked these things out and paved the way for us. So, for all those who are homeschooling, I just want to encourage you all to keep at it. It will work out. Many employers in the community are really impressed with homeschoolers. I am not talking about academic qualifications but qualities like honesty, reliability, initiative, etc.

Mac & Sophie de Thierry
Marton

Renewed Confidence

Having come from SA, where things are not nearly as easy going, I have to just pause a moment and thank God for the work you and Barbara are doing on behalf of the homeschoolers of NZ. At first, I would have been inclined to supply everything the government's way, but now, with renewed confidence, I am willing to stand my ground in the knowledge that I have nothing to hide nor fear. We have to remember that doing the "right" thing and walking the path that God has chosen for us is certainly not always easy. Our duty as homeschoolers is to witness to the MoE the wonderful results that homeschooling can achieve so that future children can benefit from this form of education. I believe now that we can do this our way whilst still fulfilling our exemption requirements.

Andrew & Judith Weakley
Auckland

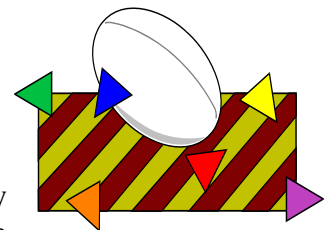
Successful ERO Review

We have just had our first ERO review. A resounding

success. I am very impressed. My wife did a wonderful job of presenting all of the "stuff" we have been doing over the last 5 years. I was impressed with the review officer's attitude, the respect he showed us and his sensible manner. In the end he was fumbling, with raised eyebrows, to find the right hyperbole to express how impressed he was. I remember back to the several teacher's meetings I attended in the public primary school where discussions of their review were focussed on what needed fixing, and I get very encouraged. The same officer reviewed two other families that we know that week, and they had similar experiences. My wife says that she would like to let others know what a blessing the reviews should be. Did they realise that you are being treated as an individual? God sees us as individuals and we are also accountable to Him. It was with some sense of privilege to think that the Government spent probably hundreds of dollars and time on our children? Children in school do not get this kind of attention, and the parents of the same children do not get the opportunity to show how well their children are doing. I know that some Home Educators do not see it this way and see the process as the enemy trying to stop or hinder them from God's task. However we see it as an opportunity to say, "HEY, this is the way that God would have it done. Take note and tell the world!" Praise God that we are able to do His will. Be encouraged all you Home Educators. So ... Keep up the good work you are doing to help us complete the job as God would have us do. Bless you richly.

Philip & Gloria Stephens
Nelson

Home Schoolers Did It

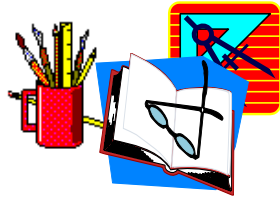


Clevedon Country Home Schoolers were

asked by the Manukau City Council's Recreational Outreach Team (who run our sports every Monday) to participate in a Touch Rugby Interschool 12 year and under competition. We entered one team (as that's all we had!). The three other schools entered four to six teams each. We made it through to the semi-finals and had the noisiest supporters on the sideline!

Well done Richard, Kevin, Jonathan, Ben, Sam, Tim, Perez, Joanne, Meagan, Sarah and Chloe.

Home School Research



Who's In Charge of Johnny's Personality?

by Andrew J. Peterson, PhD
Education Issues Correspondent for
the *California Political Review*

Establishment criticism of homeschooling these days tends to avoid -- with good reason -- questioning its academic quality. On average, homeschooled students score at the 77th percentile on standardized tests such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills according to the Home School Legal Defense Association. Instead, the critique more usually hits a supposed failure to "socialize" the students -- to teach them how to interact in society.

The December issue of the American Psychological Association's publication *Monitor*, for instance, features a report by Monitor staff reporter Bridget Murray that points to a new "wariness" among psychologists about parent-directed homeschooling. After first listing several benefits homeschooling provides, Murray turns to concerns raised by a small number of professional psychologists. There is, Murray writes, "an enormous need for outcomes research" in the area of "social development". Talking with psychologists, Murray reports, elicits such questions as whether homeschoolers are "trying to protect children from becoming adults"? Will their children be misfits with mainstream life when they are older? Will they be sheltered completely from diversity in our culture? Will they go against what society values as proper behavior? (We should all be reaching for our Politically Correct dictionaries about now.)

It isn't as though APA believes cultural norms should set every standard for child rearing. On the contrary, the December *Monitor* also includes articles titled: "Raising children to resist violence: What you can do" and "What makes kids care: Teaching gentleness in a violent world". In addition, in another publication on its Web site ("Answers to your questions about sexual orientation and homosexuality"), the APA does not hesitate to argue, with little regard to society's conventions and traditions, that homosexuality is pre-determined, unchangeable, and healthy. But when it comes to homeschoolers, suddenly APA registers deep worries about the possibility of failure to conform with societal norms.

The psychologists' concern for shaping our children's social development did not appear out of the blue; it has a long history. Turn-of-the-century psychologists were notorious for writing novels sketching Utopian schemes controlled by "professionals" in which family life would be replaced by social engineering and traditional religion run out of town. The discipline has a long tradition of using the public schools to direct personality development quite apart from the academic goals the public assume are pursued.

In 1983, noted UCLA education historian Professor Sol Cohen wrote an article published in the *History of Education Quarterly* that recounted the "mental hygiene movement" that began with small committees of intellectuals and professionals during World War I. John Dewey, who at the time was considered the world's foremost educational psychologist, was a guiding influence and leader of the movement. In the 1920s, these individuals established the new child guidance clinics and their ideas took hold in teacher education textbooks in the '30s. Personality development became a key priority for public education.

Just as physical hygiene had proven crucial for the urban public health crises of the late 1800s, they argued, so should a mental hygiene program of psychoanalytic and behaviorist psychologies be implemented to prevent schizophrenia and juvenile

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delinquency. In 1950 the summary statement of a White House Conference on Children announced that the public education system was indeed the primary agent for socialization of the nation's children. John Dewey's dream that social development should replace academics as the dominant concern of American education had arrived.

As a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley in the mid-1970s, I was the beneficiary of a National Institute of Mental Health fellowship for the study of "mental health consultation in the public schools." Seemed like a good idea at the time, but there were two problems. First, theoretical textbooks notwithstanding, I found that no specific, measurable, agreed-upon, realistic, timed, operational definition of mental health existed. Second, every minority group on campus had developed its own "wariness" about how "the man" would interpret mental health and what measures would be used to ensure that everybody was "helped". Thus, elite professionals were attempting to impose their idea of mental health on the rest of us without either defining what they meant by that phrase or even asking the opinions of (never mind showing any respect for) those whose mental health they proposed to achieve.

Nothing has changed for either the engineers or the engineered in the 20 years since I left UC Berkeley, except that now a two-decade-long record of failed programs for social development wasting billions of dollars has been accumulated. A precise summation of it all was provided by psychologist Dr. William Coulson, partner of the late Carl Rogers and former proponent of the principles of the mental hygiene movement: "What we helped achieve was an educational system which brought kids down, rather than up."

In one sense the psychologists are right: instruction involves more than academics. It is inescapably ethical, which is what all the concern over "socialization" is about. The question is, whose ethics will define proper "socialization"? Many homeschoolers and private Christian schools want their children's "socialization" to be guided by the Scriptures -- and they are no more interested than APA is in tailoring their beliefs to fit the culture's current dictates. One thing the Scriptures say is that primary responsibility for education-socialization resides with parents, with the church adding some oversight (to insure the parents do not neglect their children's religious instruction) and the state (to insure the parents commit no crimes against their children). Even Bridget Murray, in her *Monitor* article, cites survey research showing parental disengagement correlates strongly with low academic achievement and drug and alcohol abuse by teens.

For almost two centuries American education achieved great success without tax-funding or compulsory attendance. Parents, to borrow contemporary phrasing, were empowered to fulfill their God-given destiny of directing the "socialization" of the next generation. Besides homeschooling, a variety

of school reform ideas have been proposed and, to varying degrees, are being tested around the country: alternative unions, charter schools, public vouchers, private scholarships, proprietary schools, religious programs--all innovative ways to cope with the largely acknowledged failure of government (i.e., public) education. The wisdom they all share is knowing that education improves in direct relation to the degree to which parents are in charge.

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Home Educated Adults

by Wendy Priesnitz

Some time ago, we participated in the distribution of a survey questionnaire of adults who were home-educated as young people. Researcher Gary Knowles, of the University of Michigan School of Education, has sent us a copy of his draft report. The paper was presented at the 13th National Conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education in Dunedin, New Zealand. Knowles' report provides a fascinating insight into the long-term effects of home-based learning.

Knowles writes, "The characteristics of the adults in this study suggest that they grew up with specific advantages that contributed to their independent views of society and their roles in it. As a group they are not homogeneous or amenable to easy categorizations: they are located throughout the United States and Canada in both rural and urban areas; they are employed in a variety of professions and occupations, although many seem to be concentrated in those occupations that allow for independence, flexibility and, often, creativity; and they exhibit a wide range of political views and religious affiliations. Polarization in their perspectives and contexts occurs around the issues of home education and family life, with a majority reflecting a clearly positive attitude toward their home education and family experiences. Moreover, these adults do not appear to exhibit characteristics which suggest they are disadvantaged as a result of their home education experience, although some admit to slight difficulties mixing in social settings. As a result of examining the data I am prompted to ponder whether or not home schools may have advantages that hitherto have gone unrecognized."

One interesting issue raised by Knowles is the difference between social development and socialization. He defines socialization as "the process of fitting young members of society into the mould cast for them by the adults of that society". It includes, he suggests, the inculcation of widely-held community mores and values so that individuals will hold

responsible attitudes and beliefs about acting in socially acceptable ways.

Social development, on the other hand, is defined as having psychological and emotional dimensions which indicate the healthy growth of children. He makes the point that many contemporary home educating parents have chosen this method of learning because they do not believe that the public school system promotes healthy social development or because they define healthy social development different from public schools and from "the norms they perceive to represent the Anglo American middle class".

Here, briefly, are some of Knowles' findings. Forty-two percent had attended college or university after being home educated as a youth for at least two years. Twelve percent of respondents had completed advanced university degrees, another 12 percent had completed an undergraduate degree, and a further 16 percent had completed some graduate school courses.

Nearly two-thirds of the formerly home-educated adults were self-employed, indicating, says Knowles, a high level of autonomy and independence. None were unwillingly unemployed, although some chose to stay at home to care for children.

When asked whether or not they would wish to be home educated if they had their lives over again, 96 percent answered in the affirmative. Positive aspects of home-based education included the strong relationship created within their families; the self-directed, individualized nature of their learning; the resulting self-reliance; and the flexibility. Respondents felt that home-based learning had encouraged the development of self-reliance and resourcefulness, as well as the study skills associated with attending a university or college.

(This article is reprinted from *Childs Play*, a newsletter formerly published by the The Alternate Press. Although this publication is no longer available, The Alternate Press publishes a variety of up-to-date books and reports to help families facilitate home-based learning.)

Exploring God's Creation



A Lighthearted Look at X.Peckii the Parasite

by Robert van Wichen, LLB
of Palmerston North

In *Time*, 15 November 1999, there were two science articles; the first featured a tiny parasite, and the second, the human nose. Both articles assumed evolution to be true. The second article titled "The Nose Knows Left from Right" reported that researchers had found that one nostril pulled in a tiny bit more air than the other. As a result, each nostril identified the same smell as a different smell – "a sort of stereo smelling". Quite gratuitously, the writer Michael Lemonick then posed this preposterous question: "Why did evolution create such an odd system?"

I was deeply impressed by the faith of these evolutionists. And on what basis was I impressed? In order to provide the necessary background, I will reproduce the entire first article by Leon Jaroff:

The Fly with 100 Eyes: Scientists Are Puzzled by the Peepers of a Tiny Parasite

For all their brief lives, the females of one species of twisted wing insects called Xenos Peckii live inside common paper wasps, feeding on their hosts' innards. Sightless and flightless, these tiny parasites exist only to be impregnated. The luckier males mature inside the wasps, emerge at adulthood and fly away, using their olfactory sense and their eyes to find and mate with a



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female inside another wasp.

But, oh, what eyes! Peering through a microscope at a twisted-wing male, Cornell neurobiologists Elke Buschbeck, Birgit Ehmer and Ron Hoy were struck by the unusually large lens facets in X. peckii's eyes. The compound eyes of most insects have hundreds of much smaller facets. Each focuses on a handful of photoreceptors and produces only a single point in the insects's visual field. But the researchers, reporting last week in the journal Science, found that each of X peckii's 100 eyelets is really a complete eye with its own retina, consisting of some 100 receptors, that samples a "chunk" of the visual field. These neighbouring chunks, when combined in the insect's brain, produce an image with exceptionally high resolution.

While this clever visual mechanism seems unique among contemporary creatures, a similar one existed in another, more ancient species: the segmented trilobites which became extinct 230 million years ago.

X. peckii needs excellent vision in order to prevent its own extinction. "Sex pheromones from females probably help males locate the general neighbourhood of a wasp," says Ehmer. But the male, who lives less than 6 hours after taking flight, must rely on his eyesight to zero in quickly on that wasp and its female parasite so that he can perpetuate his species before he expires.

What astounded me was that this tiny and insignificant parasite, which lived for only 6 hours after taking flight, had such marvellously complex eyes. And it appears that its eyes are quite unique. Why on earth would such an insect need 100 separate eyes? How might such eyes have "evolved"? Here is one version of how it all happened:

In the "beginning", Evolution created *Xenos peckii*. Now *X. peckii* was a twisted wing insect, and it was blind for it had no eyes. And there were countless days and nights – the first eon.

And Evolution said "Let there be eyes" and *X. peckii* had two eyes, and Evolution saw that it was good. And *X. peckii* was somewhat relieved for now he could see where he was flying. And there were countless days and nights – the second eon.

And Evolution said "Let there be more eyes" and *X. peckii* had 8 more eyes. Evolution saw it was good. And Evolution hoped that *X. peckii* would now see well enough be able to locate his mate, for Evolution was sure that it was not good that *X. peckii* should be alone. And there were countless days and nights – the third eon.

And Evolution said "Let there be more eyes" and *X. peckii* had 10 more eyes. Evolution saw it was good. But while *X peckii's* eyesight was twice as good, it still was not good enough, for *X. peckii* still could not locate his mate. And there were countless days and nights – the fourth eon.

And Evolution said "Let there be more eyes" and *X. peckii* had 20 more eyes. Evolution saw it was good. *X. peckii* saw much better and now became optimistic that he could locate his mate. And there

were countless days and nights – the fifth eon.

And Evolution said "Let there be more eyes" and *X. peckii* had 30 more eyes. And Evolution saw it was good. Though *X. peckii* saw significantly better, he still could not locate his mate. Not surprisingly, *X. peckii* was getting more than a little frustrated and despaired that he might never find his mate. And there were countless days and nights – the sixth eon.

And Evolution said "Let there be more eyes" and *X. peckii* had another 30 eyes. And Evolution saw it was good. And then *X. peckii*, most relieved, saw his mate within 6 hours, and they were fruitful and multiplied.

By the seventh eon Evolution finished its work on *X. peckii*; so during the seventh eon and onwards rested from doing any further work on that twisted wing insect.

When Was Adam Created?

by Dr. Walt Brown

The ages and relationships of the patriarchs, based on the statistical information in Genesis chapters 5, 11, etc., allow one to estimate Adam's creation at about 6,000 years ago.

In the 1500s Bishop James Ussher worked out a chronology that included events from his own day back to Adam's creation. In the late 1800s Professor Edward Hull drew up *Deacon's Synchronological Chart of Universal History* which was based on Ussher's chronology and incorporated events up to about 1890. (This chart has been updated to the present and is advertised on the back cover of *Keystone*.)

It is a great project to make your own chronology of the Biblical Patriarchs. Start with graph paper and determine a convenient scale: if each 0.5 centimetre represented 10 years, a chart from Adam through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would be about 1.5 metres long.

What Uncertainties Are Involved?

1. The ages shown on the Time Chart advertised at the back of *Keystone* are based on the Hebrew (or Masoretic) text. The corresponding numbers in the Samaritan and Greek (or Septuagint) texts place Adam's creation at about 6,200 and 7,300 years ago, respectively. Which text is closest to the original is an open question. As one issue, consider that Methuselah died fourteen years after the flood, if one uses the Septuagint—a logical impossibility. (Some sources say the name Methuselah means, "When he is dead, it shall be sent." According to the numbers in this chart, the flood began when Methuselah died.)

2. Some ages in all three texts have apparently been rounded, since too many numbers end in zero or five. Rounding fifteen or so ages in Genesis probably would not inject more than twenty years of total error. A possible problem with the Masoretic and Samaritan texts is that Methuselah died exactly in the year of the flood, despite this rounding.

3. There is some disagreement concerning Terah's

age when Abraham was born. (Study carefully Genesis 11:26-32, 12:4, and Acts 7:4.) Some argue that Terah was 70 years, not the favored 130 years.

4. Luke 3:36 lists Cainan as the son of Arpachshad and the father of Shelah. In Genesis, Cainan's name occurs only in the Septuagint.

5. Most students of the subject place the death of Joseph (Jacob's son) between 1606 B.C. and 1690 B.C. An error in this date will add a corresponding error to the year of Adam's creation.

Theistic evolutionists often raise two objections to the chronological information in Genesis.

1. Some say that the genealogies contain gaps. However, the possibility of gaps is irrelevant to the year of Adam's creation. The time between the births of any two of the patriarchs is fixed by the way the information is recorded, no matter how many generations might be missing. For example, Enosh was born 105 years after Seth's birth. Kenan was born 90 years after Enosh's birth, and so on. The writer or compiler of this information had a careful, systematic and mathematical way of linking the chronology into one continuous family record.

2. Some have said that the long ages of the pre-flood patriarchs resulted from lunar months being incorrectly counted as years. If so, Mahalaleel and Enoch were five years old when they had children.

Your chart will contain other interesting details.

1. Noah was almost a contemporary of Abraham. Noah's son Shem, born before the flood, nearly out-lived Abraham. Surprisingly, many people think of Noah and Shem as relatively ancient (or imaginary) but accept Abraham as historically recent.

2. Notice the continuous chain of overlapping life spans of Adam, Methuselah, Shem, and Abraham.

3. Enoch's life was cut short, but not by death. (See Hebrews 11:5.) Notice the systematic change in life spans after the flood.

4. Genesis 5 says that each of the first nine patriarchs had "other sons and daughters" besides the son in the patriarchal line. In other words, each family had at least five children: three sons and two daughters. Statistically, if each family had ten or more children, all nine families would probably have at least three sons and two daughters. If ten or more children per family were typical before the flood, and plagues, famines, and wars were no more common than in the last several thousand years, then the world's population at the time of the flood was in the billions.

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Tough Questions People Throw Your Way



What Do You Do When the Ministry of Education Sends Your Exemption Application Back For More Information?

by Craig S. Smith

This is such a common occurrence, it is virtually standard procedure. It is nothing to worry about: they are not turning you down, they just want some more information here or there. Fine, just shovel a bit more in there and send it back.

They will often request more information under the following headings: Broad Curriculum Area; Study Area; and Timetable.

"Broad curriculum - are you using the New Zealand state school curriculum? If not, you will need to provide details of the seven core curriculum areas..."

When responding to a request for an application for exemption from enrolment, the MoE sends out its own definitions of the key words from Section 21 of the Education Act, which require home educators to teach "at least as *regularly* and *well* as in a registered school."

Their definition of the word "well" stresses that the curriculum is *your* curriculum. Home Educators *are not* required to use the New Zealand state school curriculum nor are they required to cover the "seven core curriculum areas". If the MoE sounds like they want you to do these things, you should only need to remind them of the absence of any legal requirement to do so, and then be able to fully state your own particular subject areas, however they might be covered (subject by subject, thematic, unschooling, etc.) It is not unreasonable to expect a prospective home education parent to be able to clearly explain the broad curriculum areas which they intend to use. Never be intimidated into organising your curriculum along lines the MoE sets...unless you like their system better than your own. Ask a couple of other families in your local support group how they did it....that's what the support group is there for!

You may feel that having written certain things, you will be obliged to do those things. Not true. The Ministry *expects* you to change your educational approach and tactics as time goes by: your perception of the educational task will grow and mature, the needs of the children will change, certain resources you started out with will prove ineffective with your children's learning styles and/or your teaching style,

etc. In fact, the Ministry has told me that they would be worried if you *didn't* change over time! The application form is mainly so that the Ministry can see that you are a competent person, you know what you are doing, you have a plan, you can work the plan, and that both you and your children are excited about it! These are the main things to communicate in whatever you write....your thorough confidence in your ability to succeed, enthusiasm, excitement, anticipation, total competence, that you are plugged into local and national support groups, that you are flexible and totally committed.

Today's teachers can only expect one minute of meaningful time per student per day in the typical school classroom. So how can we miss?

“Study area - this should be described.”

Fine. Describe it. Again, there are no requirements in the Act regarding “study area”, although there will be plenty of preconceived ideas in the mind of the MoE official reading the application. These officials either need reminding or instructing about what constitutes acceptable home education environments: the kitchen table, toaster, crumbs and all; the beat-up but comfortable old couch on the back porch; or like Mark Twain said was the best classroom of all: a log down by the river with a child sitting on one end and a parent sitting on the other. The questions in the exemption

application are clearly coming from a very narrow “classroom” perspective, as if they expect you to set up a regular “school” in your own home. Actually, many of us start out that way, but home education can be infinitely more flexible and fun and effective than that.

Remember that classrooms are set up for the mass teaching of a large number of mixed-ability and mixed-background children by one state (read: politically) trained teacher. The logistics of a home education scenario, which is the far superior and near-ideal tutoring/mentoring system, bear virtually no resemblance to the logistics of the classroom, rendering the home a far more effective, fun and efficient learning and teaching situation. Just think about it: how long do you suppose it takes to get all 28 seven-year-olds in a classroom simply to get out their maths books and turn to page 12? Within the last six months we had a Massey University College of Education student reveal how they teach them at college that today's teachers can only expect one minute (that is ONE MINUTE) of meaningful time per student per day in the typical school classroom. So how can we miss?

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“Regularity/timetable - please provide a timetable to show approximately how much time will be spent on each curriculum area daily and weekly.”

We wrote back to them when they asked this same question and simply pointed out that we do not work to a timetable, so to write one up would be hypocritical. We also mentioned how the number of hours spent in instruction bear little or no relation to anything in the realm of learning. We carried on to describe how our time is taken up, a bit about the routine and probable disruptions. This seemed to be good enough, for we got the exemption. I still believe that if we are simply honest and are *able to clearly articulate* our personal policy/philosophy they are happy to (and probably obliged to) run with that.

Instruction in most home education situations is self-consciously a 24-hour-a-day occupation. For some it is helpful to perceive two realms of academic learning. The first is the basic skills that must be mastered: the three Rs. These can be further broken down into: 1) Inputs, such as reading, listening, comprehension, study and research skills, interpretation of the written word, voice inflections, body language, etc. 2) Outputs, such as writing, penmanship, grammar, spelling, composition, debate, oratory, voice

modulation, body language, etc. 3) The four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division plus a range of everyday skills such as measurements, estimation, ratios, percentages, volumes, areas, many of which one should be able to do mentally. The second realm of learning is everything else, virtually all of which one can learn for themselves once they have mastered the basic skills. You can organise this “everything else” realm anyway you like: subjects like history, science, geography, logic, technology, animal husbandry, woodwork, auto mechanics, languages, whatever.

There is no minimum or maximum number of subjects you must cover, there is no sequence prescribed that home educators must follow, there is no depth of knowledge one must obtain.....as the MoE says in its definition of “well”: it is *your* curriculum. According to the MoE’s 1996 Homeschooling Desk File, “Ministry officers will look for some evidence of *planning* and *balance* that we would expect would be a feature of curriculum organisation in any registered school.”

Sometimes the people reviewing our exemption applications infer that we need to be spending as much time on each subject as they do in schools. Again, this ignores the vast superiority in the effective use of time which is typical of a home education (tutoring) situation. They certainly cannot require any specific number of hours.

We home educators too often and too easily get intimidated by these MoE officials because the actual requirements of the Education Act, even when coupled with the MoE’s own definition of the key words from the Act “regularly” and “well”, are so minimal and vague we just get the feeling there *must* be something more here required of us. But no, there isn’t. So let us not acquiesce to them, for to do so would set a pattern which would be recognised by them eventually as a standard practice, which would one day find itself written into legislation as a legal requirement.

The officials will always have us on, pushing the conventional school model on us by assumption. We need to simply hold our ground and politely refuse to be pushed around. We also need to be informed. Buy a copy of the Act and become familiar with the relevant sections. There really isn’t much. Subscribe to *TEACH Bulletin* to keep up to date with legislative developments. And keep in close contact with your local support group, and network with others around the country to pick up invaluable teaching tips and ideas on where to locate and how they use various resource materials. Home educators are re-discovering a lot of very effective teaching methods which have become virtually lost to our culture because of 120 years of compulsory, secular mass state schooling in classrooms.

Teaching Tips

Helping Your Highly Gifted Child Part I



by Stephanie Tolan
Council for Exceptional Children
Reston, Virginia, USA

Most parents greet the discovery that their child is not merely gifted but highly or profoundly gifted with a combination of pride, excitement and fear. They may set out to find experts or books to help them cope with raising such a child, only to find that there are no real experts, only a couple of books, and very little understanding of extreme intellectual potential and how to develop it. This paper deals with some areas of concern and provides a few practical suggestions based on the experience of other parents and the modest amount of research available.

Differences

To understand highly gifted children, it is essential to realize that, although they are children with the same basic needs as other children, they are very different. Adults cannot ignore or gloss over their differences without doing serious damage to these children, for the differences will not go away or be outgrown. They affect almost every aspect of these children’s intellectual and emotional lives.

A microscope analogy is one useful way of understanding extreme intelligence. If we say that all people look at the world through a lens, with some lenses cloudy or distorted, some clear and some magnified, we might say that gifted individuals view the world through a microscope lens and highly gifted individuals view it through an electron microscope. They see ordinary things in very different ways and often see what others simply cannot see. Although there are advantages to this heightened perception, there are disadvantages as well.

Since many children eventually become aware of being different, it is important to prepare yourself for your child’s reactions. When your child’s giftedness has been identified, you might open a discussion using the microscope analogy. If you are concerned that such a discussion will promote arrogance, be sure to let the child know that unusual gifts, like hair and eye color, are not earned. It is neither admirable nor contemptible to be highly gifted. It is what one does with one’s abilities that is important.

A United Front

As in most other aspects of parenting, it is important for both parents (or the adults who bear primary responsibility for raising the child) to agree on some

basic issues regarding the child's potential. Some parents of exceptionally gifted children were themselves gifted or exceptionally gifted children. If they did not learn to accept and understand their own giftedness, they may find it difficult to accept their child's unusual capacities. Raising a highly gifted child may help parents come to terms with many difficult aspects of their own lives, but it helps if they focus first on the needs of the child and come to an agreement about how to meet them.

What Highly Gifted Children Need

Exceptionally gifted children have two primary needs. First, they need to feel comfortable with themselves and with the differences that simultaneously open possibilities and create difficulty. Second, they need to develop their astonishing potential. There is a strong internal drive to develop one's abilities. Thwarting that drive may lead to crippling emotional damage. Throughout the parenting years, it is wise to keep in mind that the healthiest long-term goal is not necessarily a child who gains fame, fortune and a Nobel Prize, but one who becomes a comfortable adult and uses gifts productively.

The Early Years

Before your child begins formal schooling, differences can be handled by your willingness to follow the child's lead and meet needs as they arise. It is possible and important to treat an infant's or toddler's precocity with a degree of normalcy. For example, a 2-year-old who prefers and plays appropriately with toys designed for 6-year-olds should be given those toys. The 3-year-old who reads should be given books. The child who speaks very early and with a sophisticated vocabulary should be spoken to in kind.

Public Attitudes

Even when parents can take precocious achievements in stride, friends, family and strangers may not. Unthinking people will comment (often loudly and in front of the child) that a 2- or 3-year-old who sits in the grocery cart reading packages aloud is a phenomenon.

It may be surprisingly difficult to avoid letting parental pride lure you into encouraging your child to "perform" in public. Keep in mind the goal of making the child as comfortable as possible with individual differences. The more casually you accept unusual early accomplishments, the more your child will be able to see those accomplishments as normal. Later, when gifts are not quite as noticeable, the child will no longer feel that what made him or her valuable has somehow been lost.

Multiple Ages

Highly gifted children are many ages simultaneously. A 5-year-old may read like a 7-year-old, play chess like a 12-year-old, talk like a 13-year-old and share toys like a 2-year-old. A child may move with lightning speed from a reasoned discussion of the reasons for taking turns on the playground to a full-scale temper tantrum when not allowed to be first on the swing. You can help yourself maneuver among the child's ages by reading

about developmental norms (Gesell is a good guide) so that you are ready for (and avoid punishing) behavior that, although it seems childish in a precocious child, is absolutely age appropriate.

School

If your 9-month-old begins speaking in full sentences, you probably will not tell the child to stop and wait till other 9-month-olds catch up. You would not limit such a child to using nouns because that is as much speech as most 9-month-olds can handle. However, in public or private school that may be the approach some educators use.

It is important to realize that they are not purposely setting out to keep your child from learning, although that might be the effect. Many educators have never knowingly dealt with a highly gifted child. They do not recognize them, and they do not know how to handle them. Some educators base teaching methods on developmental norms that are inappropriate for highly gifted children. Although they may be willing to make an effort to accommodate these youngsters, they may lack sufficient information or experience and not know what type of effort to make.

When a child enters school already able to do what the teacher intends to teach, there is seldom a variety of mechanisms for teaching that child something else. Even if there were a way to provide time, attention and an appropriate curriculum, it would be necessary for the teacher to use different teaching methods. Highly gifted children learn not only faster than others, but also differently. Standard teaching methods take complex subjects and break them into small, simple bits presented one at a time. Highly gifted minds can consume large amounts of information in a single gulp, and they thrive on complexity. Giving these children simple bits of information is like feeding an elephant one blade of grass at a time--he will starve before he even realizes that anyone is trying to feed him.

When forced to work with the methods and pace of a typical school, highly gifted children may not look more capable than their peers, but less capable. Many of their normal characteristics add to this problem. Their handwriting might be very messy because their hands do not keep pace with their quick minds. Many spell poorly because they read for comprehension and do not see the words as collections of separate letters. When they try to "sound out" a word, their logical spelling of an illogical language results in errors. Most have difficulty with rote memorization, a standard learning method in the early grades.

(Stephanie Tolan is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of *Guiding the Gifted Child*. ERIC digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated. ERIC, the Educational Resources Information Center.)

The True Millennium Is Well Hidden

The passionate discussions in some papers as to when the new millennium really started is nothing new. "We have uniformly rejected all letters and declined all discussion upon the question of when the present century ends, as it is one of the most absurd that can engage the public attention, and we are astonished to find it has been the subject of so much dispute, since it appears plain. The present century will not terminate till January 1, 1801, unless it can be made out that 99 are 100... It is a silly, childish discussion, and only exposes the want of brains of those who maintain a contrary opinion to that we have stated — *The Times*, 26 December 1799.

The Birth of Christ and the Christian Epoch

A count of years from an initial epoch is the most successful way of maintaining a consistent chronology. But it must be tied to a sequence of recorded historical events.

The birth of Christ is the initial epoch of the Christian calendar. We count years from an assumed year of the birth of Christ as determined by Dionysius Exiguus (Denys the Little), a monk and astronomer from Scythia in what is now SW Russia. About AD 530 Dionysius was commissioned by Pope John I to calculate dates of Easter for future observances. Dionysius followed previous precedent by extending an existing table (by Cyrillus) covering the period "228-247" which was on a time scale reckoned from the beginning of the reign of Emperor Diocletian. However, Dionysius did not want his Easter table "to perpetuate the memory of an impious persecutor of the Church, but preferred to count and denote the years from the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ". To accomplish this he designated the years of his table *Anni Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* 532-550. Thus, Dionysius' *Anno Domini* 532 (AD 532 for short) is equivalent to *Anno Diocletiani* 248. A correspondence was thereby established between the new Christian Era and an existing system associated with historical records. (By the way, when AD is used it is always before the number. BC always follows the number. This year is AD 2000 not 2000 AD.)

What Dionysius did not do was establish an accurate date for the birth of Christ. In his scheme he believed that Christ was born on the 25th of December of the year preceding the start of the year AD 1. There is no year 0 preceding the year AD 1. Indeed, the concept of counting from zero, rather than one, does not exist in Latin and was introduced into Europe from the Middle East many centuries later. Therefore, Dionysius' calendar places the birth of Jesus Christ at the end of the year

1 BC. The 2,000th anniversary of Christ's birth would then be 25 December 2000. However, modern research indicates that Christ was probably born in 6BC and certainly by 4BC, when Herod died. So the real 2000th birthday of the Lord Jesus, the real new millennium, probably occurred during the years 1995 to 1997.

When Was the Very First Epoch?

James Ussher was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1581 and died in England in 1656. He lived through a time of tremendous political and religious upheaval in his native Ireland and in England. Though he was a Puritan in theology, he was a royalist in his steadfastness to the king and the principle of divine right of kings. Invited to participate in the Westminster Assembly, which eventually wrote the Westminster Confession and Catechism, Ussher refused because he thought the assembly itself was illegal.

In his day Ussher was an imminent scholar known to the foremost scholars and statesmen in England. At one time he had possibly the largest collection of books in Western Europe. He eventually donated the collection to Trinity College, Dublin, which his uncle James Ussher helped found. During his lifetime he was widely known as a defender of learning, of the value of books secular and sacred, and a proponent of maintaining an independent identity for Irish Protestant faith. He was appointed Archbishop of Armagh in 1625.

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His collected works total seventeen volumes. The most famous of these is his *Annals of the Old and New Testament*, published in the 1650s, which is a detailed chronology and dating of Biblical history, wherein Ussher said God created the world on the morning of October 23, 4004 B.C. He arrived at this date, in part, by adding the ages of Adam and his descendants found in Genesis 5 and 11. (Refinements by others further pinpointed this to 9 a.m., London time, or midnight in the Garden of Eden.)

This would mean that the world's 6000th birthday was on October 23, 1997. This is determined because there was no year "0", but the counting went straight from 1BC to AD1. Thus $4004 + 1997 - 1 = 6000$. It is very tempting to think of each set of 1000 years as a day, and the 7th would be our Sabbath day or millennium of rest. If Bishop Ussher's chronology is correct, and if we can validly assume each 1000 years represents a day, then we entered upon our millennium of rest just over two years ago. This also corresponds with one of the possible "true" years of Jesus' birth.

Types of Calendar

But keeping track of time and constructing calendars is a very tricky business. The principal astronomical cycles upon which we base time and calendars are:

- 1) the day (the rotation of the Earth on its axis),
- 2) the year (the revolution of the Earth around the Sun), and
- 3) the month (based on the revolution of the Moon around the Earth).

The complexity of calendars arises because these cycles of revolution do not correspond to a number of whole days, but include fractions of days and because astronomical cycles are neither constant nor perfectly commensurable with each other.

We need to identify two kinds of years. The "tropical year" is defined as the mean interval between vernal equinoxes; that is, it is a year that corresponds to the cycle of the seasons and is made up of a certain number of whole days plus a bit left over. This bit left over is not always the same. The other kind of year is a "calendar year", the kind we are used to seeing on the wall and in diaries. It is made up of either 365 or 366 whole days. You can see that the two kinds of years do not match up exactly.

Three distinct types of calendars have resulted from this situation. (There are about 40 different calendars in use in the world today.)

- 1) A solar calendar, of which the Gregorian calendar we use today is an example, is designed to maintain synchrony with the tropical year. To do so, days are intercalated (forming leap years) to increase the average length of the calendar year.
- 2) A lunar calendar, such as the Islamic calendar, follows the lunar phase cycle without regard for the tropical year. Thus the months of the Islamic calendar systematically shift with respect to the months of the Gregorian calendar.
- 3) The lunisolar calendar has a sequence of months

based on the lunar phase cycle; but every few years a whole month is intercalated to bring the calendar back into phase with the tropical year. The Hebrew and Chinese calendars are examples of this type.

The Julian Calendar

It wouldn't be hard for Dionysius to have made a mistake in determining the date of the birth of Christ, even though both Christ and he lived in times that used the same Julian calendar.

The Julian calendar, introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 BC, was a solar calendar with months of fixed lengths. Every fourth year an intercalary day was added to maintain synchrony between the "calendar year" and the "tropical year". It served as a standard for European civilization until the Gregorian Reform of 1582.

Julian years are classified as normal years of 365 days and leap years of 366 days. The year is divided into twelve formalized months that were eventually adopted for the Gregorian calendar (the one we use today).

The year 46 BC has been called the "year of confusion", because in that year Julius Caesar inserted 90 days to bring the months of the Roman calendar back to their traditional place with respect to the seasons. This was Caesar's first step in replacing a calendar that had gone badly awry. Although the pre-Julian calendar was lunisolar in inspiration, its months no longer followed the lunar phases and its year had lost step with the cycle of seasons. Following the advice of Sosigenes, an Alexandrine astronomer, Caesar created a solar calendar with twelve months of fixed lengths and a provision for an intercalary day to be added every fourth year. As a result, the average length of the Julian calendar year was 365.25 days. This is consistent with the length of the tropical year as it was known at the time.

Following Caesar's death, the Roman calendrical authorities misapplied the leap-year rule, with the result that every third, rather than every fourth, year was intercalary. Although detailed evidence is lacking, it is generally believed that Emperor Augustus corrected the situation by omitting intercalation (leap years) from the Julian years 9 BC through AD 4. After this the Julian calendar finally began to function as planned.

Through the Middle Ages the use of the Julian calendar evolved and acquired local peculiarities that continue to snare the unwary historian. There were variations in the initial epoch for counting years, the date for beginning the year, and the method of specifying the day of the month. Not only did these vary with time and place, but also with purpose. Different conventions were sometimes used for dating ecclesiastical records, fiscal transactions and personal correspondence.

Caesar designated January 1 as the beginning of the year. However, other conventions flourished at different times and places. The most popular alternatives were March 1, March 25, and December 25. This continues to cause problems for historians, since, for example,

February 28, AD 998, as recorded in a city that began its year on March 1, would be the same day as February 28, AD 999, of a city that began the year on January 1.

Days within the month were originally counted from designated division points within the month: Kalends, Nones, and Ides. The Kalends is the first day of the month. The Ides is the thirteenth of the month, except in March, May, July and October, when it is the fifteenth day. The Nones is always eight days before the Ides.

By the eleventh century, consecutive counting of days from the beginning of the month came into use. Local variations continued, however, including counts of days from dates that commemorated local saints. The inauguration and spread of the Gregorian calendar resulted in the adoption of a uniform standard for recording dates.

Gregorian Calendar

The Gregorian calendar resulted from a need to reform the method of calculating dates of Easter. Under the Julian calendar the dating of Easter had become standardized, using March 21 as the date of the equinox. By the thirteenth century it was realized that the true equinox had regressed from March 21 (its supposed date at the time of the Council of Nicea, AD 325) to a date earlier in the month. As a result, Easter was drifting away from its springtime position and was losing its relation with the Jewish Passover. Over the next four centuries, scholars debated the "correct" time for celebrating Easter and the means of regulating this time calendrically. The Church made intermittent attempts to solve the Easter question without reaching a consensus.

By the sixteenth century the equinox had shifted by ten days, so something had to be done. At the behest of the Council of Trent, Pope Pius V introduced some adjustments. Pope Gregory XIII, who succeeded Pope Pius in 1572, soon convened a commission to consider reform of the calendar, since he considered his predecessor's measures inadequate.

The Gregorian calendar, proposed by Aloysius Lilius, a physician from Naples, met the recommendations of Pope Gregory's calendar commission and was instituted by the papal bull "Inter Gravissimus", signed on February 24, 1582. Ten days were deleted from the calendar, so that October 4, 1582 was followed by October 15, 1582, thereby causing the vernal equinox of 1583 and subsequent years to occur about March 21. This new calendar was promulgated through the Roman Catholic world but took a while considering the logistical problems of communication and governance of those times. Protestant states initially rejected the calendar but gradually accepted it over the coming centuries. (The Gregorian calendar was adopted in Britain 170 years later, in the year 1752, when September 2nd was followed by September 14th. This provides a pretty trap for unwary students of history trying to reconcile events in England with events on the Continent.) As international communications

developed, the civil rules of the Gregorian calendar were gradually adopted around the world.

Leap Years

According to the Gregorian calendar, which is the civil calendar in use today, years evenly divisible by 4 are leap years, with the exception of centurial years that are not evenly divisible by 400. Therefore, the years 1700, 1800, 1900 and 2100 are not leap years, but 1600, 2000, and 2400 are leap years.

The Gregorian calendar year is intended to be of the same length as the cycle of the seasons. However, the cycle of the seasons, technically known as the tropical year, is approximately 365.2422 days. Since a calendar year consists of an integral number of whole days, a calendar year cannot exactly match the tropical year. If the calendar year always consisted of 365 days, it would be short of the tropical year by about 0.2422 days every year. Over a century, the calendar and the seasons would become out of sync by about 24 days, so that the beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere would shift from March 20 to April 13.

To synchronize the calendar and tropical years, leap days are periodically added to the calendar, forming leap years. If a leap day is added every fourth year, the average length of the calendar year is 365.25 days. This was the basis of the Julian calendar, introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. In this case the calendar year is longer than the tropical year by about 0.0078 days. Over a century this difference accumulates to a little over three quarters of a day. From the time of Julius Caesar to the AD 1500s, the beginning of spring shifted from March 23 to March 11.

When Pope Gregory XIII instituted the Gregorian calendar in 1582, the calendar was shifted to make the beginning of spring fall on March 21 and a new system of leap days was introduced. Instead of intercalating a leap day every fourth year, 97 leap days would be introduced every 400 years, according to the rule given above. Thus, the average Gregorian calendar year is 365.2425 days in length. This agrees to within a half a minute of the length of the tropical year. It will take about 3300 years before the Gregorian calendar is as much as one day out of step with the seasons.

The Hebrew Calendar

As mentioned earlier, there are other calendars, most of three types: solar, such as our Gregorian; lunar, such as the Islamic; and lunisolar, such as the Hebrew calendar. It is based on calculation rather than observation. Each year consists of twelve or thirteen months, with months consisting of 29 or 30 days. An intercalary month is introduced in years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19 in a nineteen-year cycle. Years are counted since the creation of the world, which is assumed to have taken place in 3761 BC. In that year, AM 1 started (AM = Anno Mundi = year of the world). Our 1 January 2000

The Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar is a purely lunar calendar in which months correspond to the lunar phase cycle. As a result, the twelve lunar months rotate through the four seasons, coming back to where they used to be over a period of about 33 years. That is, their month of Safar sometimes occurs in winter, sometimes in summer.

Day 5 of their week, which is called Jum'a, is the day for congregational prayers. Unlike the Sabbath days of the Christians and Jews, Jum'a is not a day of rest. It begins at sunset on Thursday and ends at sunset on Friday.

Their initial epoch, A.H. 1 (Anno Higeræ), is reckoned from the Era of the Hijra, commemorating the migration of the Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina. It is generally taken by astronomers to be Thursday, July 15, AD 622 (Julian calendar), while those favouring chronological tables generally use Friday, July 16, AD 622. Our 1 January 2000 is in A.H. 1420.

Keeping Time is a Messy Business

Sweden has a curious history. Sweden decided to make a gradual change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. By dropping every leap year from 1700 through 1740 the eleven superfluous days would be omitted and from 1 Mar 1740 they would be in sync with the Gregorian calendar. (But in the meantime they would be in sync with nobody!)

So 1700 (which should have been a leap year in the Julian calendar) was not a leap year in Sweden. However, by mistake 1704 and 1708 became leap years. This left Sweden out of synchronisation with both the Julian and the Gregorian world, so they decided to go "back" to the Julian calendar. In order to do this, they inserted an extra day in 1712, making that year a double leap year! So in 1712, February had 30 days in Sweden.

Later, in 1753, Sweden changed to the Gregorian calendar by dropping 11 days like everyone else.

CHomeS Roundup



I spent the entire holiday break researching and writing a submission to the Ministry of Justice on their Discussion Document "Same-Sex Couples and the Law". Very depressing. The biased nature of both the discussion document and the background paper was amazing: they took a "non-judgmental" approach which automatically forced them to regard married couples, defactos and homosexual "pairs" as all being on an equal footing. Well, once you do that, the result is a foregone conclusion: there is no logical reason why homosexual or lesbian "couples" (terms which are nowhere defined) should not have the same rights and privileges as do married couples when it comes to formal recognition in law and society, claims on property and the adoption of children.

No country on earth has actually redefined "marriage" to include same-sex liaisons, in spite of what we may have heard in the media. What has happened is that a couple of governments have made provision for such pairs to register their relationship with the state, formalising it more than defactos do. The net result is the same, of course, for it means the state must listen to their every claim for inheritance, reproductive technology, and adoption rights. Such a thing would amount to a total radical and revolutionary redefinition of two foundational institutions in our society, in Western civilisation: marriage and the family. The tenor of these discussion documents puts traditional marriage on the defensive of having to justify its existence and place of privilege in law, by asking how different treatment of homosexual "couples" from marrieds can be justified. This issue WILL affect us all greatly. Please consider it.

The ministry of Justice would like feedback by 31 March 2000. Either do the questionnaire on their website; write your comments in response to their printed questionnaire attached to the Discussion Document, "Same-Sex Couples and the Law"; or simply write your comments to them. Request a copy of the discussion document mentioned above and also a "Backgrounding the Issues" document from:

Ministry of Justice
PO Box 180, Wellington
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email: reception@justice.govt.nz

Copies of these documents and the questionnaire for electronic completion are available on their website:

www.justice.govt.nz

Send your submissions to (only one copy needed):

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