

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 10

October 1997

Reviews or Reports? We'll Know Soon!

Derek Miller of the MOE advises that within a few days (of today, 21 October) all home schoolers will receive a letter explaining the

situation. Rob Williamson of the ERO also says that their office will be releasing a brochure in the very near future....stay tuned!

Truancy Troubles

On 2 September 1997 the Editor wrote to Gorham Milbank, the MOE's Truancy Project Manager, to ask about concerns that have arisen regarding the powers of Truancy Officers.

In part the letter read:

Our organisation and the many readers nation-wide of our monthly TEACH Bulletin (sample enclosed) would be keen to learn what your office could do to allay our two main concerns:

Our first is that some home educated children are not only likely to be on the streets during school hours, but value very highly the flexibility of their home education programmes to be able to do so. They do not want to be hassled by truancy officers, nor should they be. Some among the (XYZ) support group suggested home educators organise ID cards for their children, but others said it is not their problem to go to the trouble and expense.....it is the truancy officers' problem. And a local lawyer said hooligans and chronic truants would soon come up with similar ID cards. What is to be done?

Our second is, let's face it, perverts will soon realise they can find some "distinctive badge", stop children aged six and above out walking on the street, claim to be truancy officers and see how many children will get into the car.

We look forward to your response, and would appreciate any opportunity to talk over the issues and have whatever input you thought was appropriate into this difficult area of policy formation.

Mr Milbank's reply is here on page one and continued on page two.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  Te Tihuhu o te Matauranga

10 October 1997

Craig S Smith
National Director
Christian Homeschoolers of Australasia
4 Tawa Street
PALMERSTON NORTH

Dear Mr Smith, tena koe.

Thank you for your letter of 2 September 1997, concerning Attendance Officers.

Section 3 of the Education Act 1989 provides students with a right to education, and Section 20 requires young people from 6 to 16 to attend a registered school unless exempted (S21 or S22).

Section 25 of the Act requires schools' boards of trustees to ensure that enrolled students attend school. Section 31 enables boards to appoint Attendance Officers, and sets out what Attendance Officers can legally do to carry out their responsibilities. This provides a way to back up the work schools do in monitoring students' attendance and following up on absences.

The Ministry of Education, in providing funding support for District Truancy Services (DTSs), draws the attention of those involved - schools, Safer Community Councils, Iwi and other community groups - to the fact that, under the Education Act, it is schools which have the right to appoint Attendance Officers and that schools and DTSs need to ensure Attendance Officers work in a way which is safe both for the workers and the young people.

Attendance Officers, when patrolling for truants, may well find young people legitimately not at school. There are several categories of these young people including, for example: students out of school on approved personal or school business, overseas visitors, homeschoolers and students from The Correspondence School. Attendance Officers need to be able to check the veracity of information provided. The fact that some young people have claimed "homeschooling" or "correspondence" as a cover for truancy has been mentioned by several District Truancy Services. The concerns you are raising about the safety of young people are issues that have also been mentioned.

The Ministry commends that groups of parents concerned about the issues you are raising make contact with their local District Truancy Service Coordinating Committee (which comprises representatives of the schools, Safer Community Council, Iwi, and often Police and CYPFS as well), and meet with them to discuss the issue. It is probably best to meet, at the same time, both with this broader group and the Attendance Officer(s) if this can be arranged. It could also be helpful if the group's homeschooled children meet the Attendance Officer(s).

Clearly, schools have the right to appoint Attendance Officers to help with the work required by the Education Act - that is, to ensure students do attend school. Equally clearly, parents have the right to ensure the safety of their children.

Teachnz
Akeia e Aotearoa

Recruitment Line: 0800 832 244 (0800 Teachnz)
Internet: <http://www.Teachnz.govt.nz>

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TEACH Bulletin

is a monthly publication of TEACH Publications, and is concerned with those things which may impact on home educators. Articles will deal with political developments, statist and professional trends, correspondence with educationalists, and other items of general interest to home educators. There is also a regular opinion poll regarding educational issues of the day that may impact home schoolers.

TEACH Bulletin is available for a subscription of \$16 per year for 12 issues (none in December), or by becoming a member of TEACH for a donation of \$30 or more. Some of the benefits of membership are:

- Discounts on Christian Home Schoolers of NZ National Family Conference fees
- Discounts on TEACH National Leadership Forum fees
- Coaching on how to participate in the Parliamentary process via letter writing, making submissions, lobbying MPs, etc.
- An annual free gift
- Discounts on resources, books, T-Shirts, etc.
- Discounts on Sunshine Educational coach tours
- An official TEACH tax-deductible receipt for your donation

Your donation toward membership also helps to develop further services exclusively for home schoolers such as scholarships, summer schools, national tours by overseas experts, curriculum, and home school resource fairs, national and international field trips.

All correspondence to:

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Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching.
— Proverbs 1:8

The Ministry does not set out specific requirements on matters such as the work of Attendance Officers, but does, when appropriate, draw attention to good practice.

The Education Act sets out the rights and responsibilities of Attendance Officers. Some examples of the Ministry's views of good practice on this matter are:

- Attendance Officers must be clearly identified (as required in the Act), and their car should also have an identifying label;
- It is helpful if schools arrange for the district Attendance Officer(s) to be introduced to their students at a school assembly;
- It is helpful to have photos of newly appointed Attendance Officers in the local paper;
- When a student is out of school on approved business, it is normal for schools to require them to carry a note from home, endorsed and stamped by the school;
- Attendance Officers should never touch a young person, nor should they pressure them to get into their car;
- Taking account of the need for both worker and student safety, it may be helpful for Attendance Officers only to work in pairs;
- Where an explanation such as "homeschooling" or "correspondence" is given, the Attendance Officer should check this out, taking a conservative approach (such as: using a cellphone to contact the parent to check the information given; simply obtaining a name and address and checking later; or being prepared to let the matter drop at that time and picking it up again if another occasion arises - especially if it turns out they were not told the truth).

The Ministry has also suggested that parents of homeschooled children provide them with a photocopy of the exemption certificate from the Ministry. A home photograph of the young person could easily be attached, with parents counter-signing the certificate. A group of homeschoolers may find it helpful to provide a list of students' names and home contacts to the District Truancy Service. That is a matter for local discussion and decision.

A District Truancy Service can also check with the Ministry as to whether a specific young person has an exemption for homeschooling.

The Ministry acknowledges there is a need for a sensitive balancing of needs, rights and responsibilities in this situation. District Truancy Services are a partnership of schools, community groups and parents. Parents of homeschoolers can also be seen as part of this partnership, and good will should be the basis for resolving the issue in each community. It is likely that, as there will be ongoing changes both of Attendance Officers and the young people being homeschooled, further meetings will be needed once or twice a year to maintain good contact, and to resolve any issues that arise.

I am happy to forward a copy of your letter and my reply to the contact person of the Hamilton District Truancy Service if you would find that helpful.

Thank you for drawing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely, Gorkam Milbank



Gorkam Milbank
Truancy Project Manager

The State Schools Want the Good Students

A voucher system for education would increase the differences between schools, says a retired Massey University educationalist Ivan Snook. Dr Snook said the voucher system seemed to offer parents choice. But in reality, the schools had the choice. The targeted scheme for private schools (introduced in 1995) was the beginning of this, he said.

Large numbers of students had applied to enter the scheme, which paid for children from lower socio-economic families to attend private schools. But it was up to the schools to choose the three or four students they wanted.

"What's really happening is the state schools are being deprived of some of the very students who

would be good role models for young people having trouble. All (the scheme) does is cream off the most motivated children, and leave the state schools with a lot of lower socio-economic children." (From *Manawatu Standard*, 8 Nov 1995.)

TEACH Comment:

Is Dr Snook suggesting that, in the interests of community mindedness, parents who have spent years building positive character traits into their children toss them into the public school system so these good traits may rub off onto the "young people having trouble"? Is he further suggesting that the troubled behaviour will NOT rub off onto the role-model child? I for one am not willing or community minded to that degree to take such chances with my children's lives when I know home schooling provides possibly the best social and academic training available.

Trading Post



Wanted:

The set of "Little Owl" Kindergarten phonics readers which are no longer published (A Beka).

Contact: Cheryl Cobb, ph. (07) 825-2900.

Letters to Editor



Invaluable

I am a post-graduate student doing some research on home schooling issues. I have been receiving TEACH and have found it invaluable in keeping up with the politics of home schooling. Your August issue was most interesting.....especially the review of your meeting with the ERO review panel. I think educators are increasingly supportive of home schooling (the enlightened ones) as they see the state system consistently failing so many children.

Angela T.
Auckland

The Other Side

"The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him." (Pr 18:17)

Your September bulletin has a letter from Maureen Perkins which I believe presents only one side of the story.

Maureen and I "converse" electronically but have never met. She supports our NZ home schoolers web site, and we share dissatisfaction with previous levels of communication from the Federation. I

joined its national council to work on this. I did not achieve all I wanted, but learned how much quality work was done by a dedicated band of home schoolers.

I was amazed by the 1996 AGM. Maureen was not there - but understands the confusion outside Auckland. After the meeting I talked privately with some home schoolers who mixed with both groups. They confirmed the Federation's public statements, and their reluctance to speak raises questions about who is "engendering fear".

The AGM was not run in an unconstitutional way. It was extra-constitutional, because the constitution did not cover the situation which existed - but it followed Justice Department advice.

She also refers to newsletters "verging on libellous". The key person helping the Federation work through to a new constitution is a home schooler who is both a lawyer and a Christian. I find it hard to imagine that she would knowingly allow incorrect or libellous information to be published. As a member since 1990, I have never known them to publish incorrect information or to give wrong advice. They of-

ten delay publishing their view on some issues as they prefer to get all of the facts before acting. There have been several instances where this policy has been well justified.

This cannot be said for many other groups or publications. People have recently had incorrect advice on legal issues. I mistakenly acted on advice in one other newsletter, with undesirable results. I now treat with extreme caution advice in any other publication.

I don't know how we can stop this infighting - but if home schooling remains dis-united, history suggests that our opposition will pick us off, faction by faction. Home schooling will suffer.

Phil Astley
Lower Hutt

Reading Out Loud

by David M. Schwartz

As the author of the best-selling *Read-Aloud Handbook*, Jim Trelease believes making time for books creates a lifetime love of reading. Your grandparents may have practiced it, children's librarians have been doing it all along, common sense makes it fairly plain, and thousands of academic studies have proven its worth, but reading to children on a daily basis is the best-kept secret in education today.

"Most people don't believe me when I tell them that reading aloud is the single most important factor in reading success," Trelease says. "They don't believe me for three reasons: One, it's simple. Two, it's free. And three, the child enjoys it." The most

(Continued on page 4)

Coming Events Home Educators' Infomercials

Homeschooling Information

Workshop

Saturday 22 November 1997, Windsor Park Baptist Church, 550 East Coast Bays Rd., Mairangi Bay, Auckland. \$20 per person or couple. Keynote address and 12 electives. Contact Dorinda (09) 480-6878, Lesley (09) 483-8036 or Lyn (09) 444-4998.

Canterbury Home Educators Family Camp

28 - 30 November 1997, Hibburt Park, Spencerville, North Canterbury. Write to Chris Bell, Shands Rd., R.D. 6, Christchurch 8021 or ring Jill at (03) 352-7554.

TEACH Leadership Forum

Thursday 5 February 1998, Palmerston North

TEACH National Home Educators

Athletics, Swimming & Games Competitions

6-7 February 1998, Ross Intermediate and Freyberg High Schools, Palmerston North.

CHomeS National Family Conference

6-7 February 1998, Freyberg High School, Palmerston North. Guest speaker: Duncan Lennox, Hastings. Contact: C & B Smith, 4 Tawa St., Palmerston North, ph/fax (06) 357-4399.

At Last!

A Resource Directory for Home Educators (Auckland Edition)

Looking for information on home schooling and don't know where to start?

Look no further than this Directory!

Contains information on Exemptions, essays on home education, recommended reading, resource suppliers, places to go, magazines, organisations to join support groups in New Zealand and much more!

produced by Kate Jounay for the Home Educators' Network of Aotearoa (HENA)

To obtain your copy please send \$10 plus \$1 for postage to: HENA, P O Box 11-645 Ellerslie, Auckland 1131

Home Educators' Network of Aotearoa
The Home Educators' Network of Aotearoa, (HENA) was set up in April '95 as a vehicle to facilitate communication between homeschoolers and to assist us to support each other by exchanging ideas and information and sharing activities of interest.

Subscription is \$15.00 per year. This entitles you to receive a phone list of HENA subscribers throughout the country and a list of Support Group contacts, and the magazine, all published quarterly.

It is a forum for the sharing of information, resources and ideas pertinent to home-schooling. We encourage all subscribers to participate. Please send your contributions (articles, letters to the editor, children's stories, poems, book reviews, pictures, want ads, for sale items, etc.) to:

Kate Jounay, HENA Editor P O Box 11-645, Ellerslie 1131 Auckland. ph. (09) 579-8573. Reprints cost \$1.50 aplece.

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Wellington Home Schooling Association's General Information Pack

Loaded with information on filling in an exemption application, resources, support activities and more. \$10. Write to WHSA, c/-24 Stephen St., Upper Hutt.

Manawatu Home Educators' Starting Out Pack

Tips on answering exemption applications, organising your day, sample newsletters and more. \$8. Write to: MHE, PO Box 4133, Palmerston North.

Canterbury Home Educators' "Getting Started in Home Schooling"

Many good tips and contacts for those just starting out. \$2. Write to Jill Hanna, 17 Rathlin St., Redwood, Christchurch.

(Continued from page 3)

important thing parents can do for a child, next to hugging him, is to read to him. And, Trelease adds, after that comes severely curtailing time spent in front of the TV.

Study after study from reading researchers confirms a litany of benefits: reading to children builds vocabulary and background knowledge and establishes the reading-writing connection; it exposes children to a wealth of experiences outside their own; it stimulates imagination, stretches attention spans, nourishes emotional development, encourages compassion, reshapes negative attitudes to positive ones; and it introduces textures and nuances of

the English language rarely heard on TV sitcoms.

Upon the birth of their daughter, Marcia and Mark Thomas received *The Read-Aloud Handbook* as a gift. Previously, they hadn't considered reading to a baby, but they had a special reason for wanting to promote Jennifer's intellectual development: she was born with Down's syndrome. "We figured it couldn't hurt," says Marcia Thomas, "so we put her on a diet of ten books a day." As an infant, Jennifer required surgery and spent seven weeks in the hospital. For the times when her parents couldn't be present, they left recorded books and a tape recorder for the nurses to play. By

age 2, Jennifer brought books to her parents and regularly sat still for an hour at a time as they were being read. By age 5, she was reading on her own and carting books around by the bagful.

Now a 10-year-old, Jennifer is a voracious reader with a vocabulary her teacher describes as "phenomenal".

"I know what you're thinking," says Trelease. "There are only 24 hours in a day. It's true. But who ever told you that parenting was going to be a time-saving activity? Men, you can do it all: you can shoot some hoops after supper and on the very same night you can read *Charlotte's Web!*"