

One in Five Schools Failing

One in five schools is failing to meet student learning needs, and up to 20 per cent of children are struggling academically, the Education Review Office says.

Parliament's Education and Science Select Committee has launched an inquiry into literacy and numeracy standards to look at why so many students are failing. It follows an ERO report last year that found one in five students was under-achieving. The inquiry will assess the problem's extent, consider minimum achievement standards in schools and recommend changes.

ERO head Karen Sewell said the ERO was reviewing how schools identified struggling students and what was being done to improve their academic performance. A report is due in October.

Though most children had a "fair chance of learning", 20 per cent of schools surveyed since February were not reliably identifying students' progress and academic achievement. It meant those who were falling behind could miss out on extra help. "There are some schools where student learning needs are not being met." However, literacy and numeracy teaching had improved in recent years because of better teacher training, which was expected to boost academic results.

National education spokesman Bill English said there were no national standards to assess student learning prior to them sitting the National Certificate of Educational Achievement in year 11. "We can't know which kids in which schools are in your 20 per cent because we've got

no benchmark to measure their achievement." Ms Sewell disagreed, saying "broad" national standards were in place through curriculum objectives and other assessment tools.¹

This same proportion of failure has been seen at University level. Victoria University Accountancy Professor Don Trow said one in five of his first year students did not have the ability needed to finish his degree. "They take up a lot of time and want personal assistance and direction. It's an unfortunate waste of teachers' time and taxpayers' money," he said.

Because Universities are funded

on the number of students they get through the door, they tend to lower the bar to get more people in. Professor Trow says it has dropped too low. Many students today cannot produce a decent essay or a coherent sentence, let alone do quick mental arithmetic.²

Professor Trow's comments about students needing assistance and direction are not to be taken as heartless. He is referring to the fact that too many University students, on the verge of adulthood, still require spoon-feeding, have ill-formed or nil study habits and really don't know why they're on campus or what they should do with their lives.

Notes:

1. *Dominion Post*, "One in five schools failing, says ERO chief," 15 June 2006, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3700704a7694,00.html>
2. *Dominion Post*, "Flawed funding sees student bar lowered," 15 March 2006, p. B7.

New Zealand Liberty in Grave Danger

MMP has done nothing to enhance New Zealand's democratic political traditions or our expectations of personal freedom and liberty. Tyrants can rule from Wellington with little real opposition.

The reason is that we lack any meaningful checks and balances on the accumulation of power in our political system. To illustrate, let us first describe the traditionally de-centralised checks and balances of the American system.

Separation of Powers

Like us, the Americans have three branches of civil Government: the Legislative, the Executive and the Judicial. Each has the ability to check and balance the power of

the others (a doctrine known as separation of powers) so none can consolidate power to itself, but must work with the others in order to function.

The Legislative is called Congress and is made up of two houses: the Senate (with two Senators from each of the 50 States, giving each state equal representation) and the House of Representatives (with a different number of Representatives, based on the population, from each of the 50 States, giving more populous States greater representation). All those in both houses of Congress are elected by the people.

The Executive is made up of the

President and Vice-President (both elected by the people) and the Cabinet. The Cabinet is the President's advisors and heads of the large bureaucracies: Secretary of State, of the Treasury, of Defense, of Agriculture, etc. These Secretaries are not elected by the people but appointed by the President.

While the President (Executive) may be of one political party, the Senate and/or the H of R (Legislative) may be of another party. A Bill can originate in the Senate, in the H of R or by the President. It has to get past the other two before becoming law. Much negotiation may be needed to get a Bill through, for if one of the three votes it down, it can still become law if the other two pass it again with a larger majority (2/3 rather than a simple 1/2). It is unlikely that both houses of Congress are controlled by the same political party as the President, especially since Representatives are elected for terms of only 2 years, Senators for terms of 6 years and the President for a term of 4 years.

The Judicial is made up of the Courts of Law, in particular the Supreme Court. It has the power to

declare unilaterally a law that has been passed to be unconstitutional and to strike it down. Supreme Court Judges are appointed for life by the President with the Senate's approval.

Consolidation of Power

In the New Zealand Parliamentary system, we also have the same three branches: Legislative, Executive and Judicial. However, our Legislative has only one House, the House of Representatives consisting at present of 121 MPs, only half of whom are elected directly by the people. The Executive, which is the Prime Minister plus the Cabinet, is not really a separate branch, but is drawn from this same group of MPs. The Judicial is the courts, but the top spot, Attorney General, is appointed by the current Prime Minister.

Consequently, power tends to be concentrated into the hands of those MPs who make up the majority (either of one party or a coalition of several as we have at present) in the H of R and who thus form "the Government". The rest of the MPs are simply known as "the opposition". As we all know, "the Government" can ram through whatever legislation it likes, simply because it has the numbers to do so by virtue of the fact it is "the Government."

The danger should be obvious: a tyrannical leader or even a complicity of leaders can ignore the wishes of the people and pass legislation to engineer the society as they like, with no one to call them to account. Yes, there are elections every three years, but we are all familiar with the drill: the two major parties try to outdo the other in promising financial handouts while the rest ineffectively talk policy. New Zealanders do not seem used to the idea that MPs should be civil servants and do

all they can to accommodate the wishes of the electorate. The MPs appear to have manoeuvred the voters into the position where they say, "Well, we voted those MPs into office....it's now their job to make the laws. Let's just leave them to it."

That is a luxury I believe we can no longer afford....to have such trust in the MPs; that they will do what is best for all of us; and that whatever they do will be a sensible thing. No. We have some incredibly committed ideologues in Parliament who are convinced their position is the one the rest of us need to adopt.

I was in Philadelphia last year, standing outside of Independence Hall where the Americans signed the Declaration of Independence and formulated their Constitution. A Canadian fellow and I grizzled together at length about the way our respective Parliaments appeared to disdain the clearly expressed majority views of the voters and just enacted whatever legislation the ruling Party favoured at the time. Then we looked around us and commented that if the US Congress acted as did our Parliaments, the US voter would be enraged, and those Congressmen's heads would roll. "So why doesn't that happen in Canada and NZ?" I asked this fellow. His simple reply was, "Perhaps that's just the Parliamentary system."

That reply seems to mean nothing can be done. Well, something *must* be done about where New Zealand is headed. And voters can do it: this country's political process is wide open and very transparent. Any Joe Bloggs can write to any MP and they are obliged to reply! Not so in the US. You ring your MP and can get a face-to-face appointment, just the two of you! Not so in the US. You write a submission to a Bill and can speak face-to-face with the Select Committee about it, and those several MPs will sit there and listen to you. Not so in the US.

What US voters do, however, is get organised and put incredible pressure on their Congressmen by phoning them, faxing them, writing and sending emails. The phone is the primary weapon: home schoolers in the USA, organised and angry about some impending legislation, have

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

Trading Post



Wanted:

Penpal for 10 year old girl. I am 10 years old. My hobbies are netball, dancing, singing, writing, drawing, stamp collecting, scrapbooking and I like birds.

Contact:

Ruby Hunt
755 State Highway 1
Koromiko
R.D. 3
Blenheim

on occasion phoned various Congressmen in such numbers they shut down the Congressional switchboard. Such disruption and such attention to one issue is too much for US politicians: they have either dropped the issue like a hot potato or have voted it into oblivion. But the point is, the politicians acted because they were pressured. And it seemed to be the personal touch of thousands of phone calls that did it.

We home educators have seen the effectiveness of this in NZ: in June and July of 2004 our hundreds of emails stopped the MoE in its tracks, and they quickly opened up to negotiate more on the proposed changes to the exemption application. Back in 1990 we convinced the MPs that home educators should not be required to have charters as the schools were. And our submissions modified the proposed powers of ERO officers and got us some favourable comments in Hansard when the Education Legislation Amendment Bill went through back in 1998.

So what is the issue today? Why this big article on how Parliament works? Because, as divergent and unique as we home educators are, one thing we are united upon: we as parents maintain it is our duty and responsibility — not that of the state — to determine the kind of education our children will have. The state should never, ever have prior say over our children in this and associated areas. Yet this is precisely the danger we face today. Our authority as parents is being

directly challenged. It is being done under cover of a Bill that is said to be an anti-violence Bill, one that will help reduce violence toward children. Sadly, it will do no such thing.

What the Bill actually does is repeal Section 59 of the Crimes Act, removing any legal justification for parents to use force “by way of correction” toward their children. Specifically it will remove from parents the legal authority to use “reasonable” force. And since “unreasonable” force is already out of bounds, it means parents cannot use force at all to correct or train or discipline. (Parents, and anyone else for that matter, will continue to be legally justified in using force to remove from immediate danger, as is covered in other parts of the Crimes Act.)

Think of the implications: if parents cannot use force to correct their children, how does one get them to stop destroying property and start caring for property? To dress a certain way; use a certain vocabulary and not another vocabulary; to read, watch, view and play this and not read, watch, view or play that; to come here and not go there; to stay with these people and not to associate with those people; always to obey parents and other proper authorities; always to show proper respect to those to whom respect is due; never to lie, cheat, steal or deceive and always to own up to your own actions and words as well as defend the weak?

While the promoters of this Bill (MP Sue Bradford and Children’s Commissioner Cindy Kiro and others) say Police will not prosecute for “light smacks”, they totally ignore several salient facts.

First, that the Police Commissioner’s Office has already ruled that any smack would be classed as criminal assault if Section 59 was ever repealed. Second, that private persons can report suspected abuse against anyone else¹ and do so possibly for reward (if Parentline chief executive Maxine Hodgson has her way — see next story, p. 4). Third, these private persons can bring such reports of

suspected abuse to either a Police officer or a Social Worker, and each is obliged to “undertake or arrange for the undertaking of such investigation as may be necessary or desirable into the matters contained in the report”.² Fourth, a Social Worker can not only do this on his or her own initiative, but can actually organise a warrant to enter a home and remove a child, “using force if necessary”.³

Fifth, the prohibition on the use of force extends way beyond smacking and into the inculcation of morals and attitudes and knowledge and skills and understanding. If it would be assault to try to force another adult to obey you and your spouse, to express love and service to others, to dress a certain way, to perform certain chores about the house, to keep away from food items or reading materials or persons you decided were not good for the adult, to study or write or read or talk about subjects you select, then it would be assault for you to do these (and countless other acts of parenting) to your children if Section 59 were ever repealed.⁴

The only exception to this is if the adult were to give you permission or agree with you; but any attempt to go against the adult’s will is assault. Here is the key to understanding the repeal lobby’s motivation: they want — and are prepared to force via this Bill to repeal Section 59 — all parents to view their children as autonomous independent individuals whom parents must not correct by force, train by force or discipline by force without the child’s agreement.

Sixth, any private person can report you solely because he “believes that any child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived.”¹ Political Correctness can become a real curse toward us home educators at this point. We are already considered fringe by many who would happily say our view of socialisation or of minimal TV or the unschooling approach or of Creationism or of salvation in Christ alone is “likely” to cause our children to be “emotionally” harmed, “neglected or deprived.”

Repeal of Section 59 will set up all parents and families — and us home educators in particular — to be thoroughly ravaged by future social engineers, Social Workers, Police, MoE and ERO officials who are far less tolerant of individualism, home education, parents uncertified by a teacher's training college, Christians, children on the streets between 9am and 3pm, and other such crimes. Repeal will cause everyday parenting activities to be criminalised. Repeal will enable the authorities selectively to apply the law of assault to prosecute individual parents or people groups (such as home educators) at will.

This Bill to Repeal Section 59 is ideological and totalitarian, what one might expect from North Korea or the old USSR. It has no place in New Zealand.

Notes:

- 1.Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989, Section 15.
- 2.Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989, Section 17(1).
- 3.Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989, Section 39. Please note that a Social Worker can do this on his or her own, needing only the cooperation of a sympathetic District Court Judge, any Justice, Community Magistrate or any Registrar. Please note also that the modifier "reasonable" is not included in this quote from the CYF Act. These pro-repeal MPs and so-called child advocacy groups are happy to remove a parent's authority to use "reasonable force" to correct, train or discipline, while preserving for individual Social Workers the power to use force unrestrained by the word "reasonable" to enter homes and wrench children from their mothers' arms. Social workers are already doing this. If Section 59 is repealed, the threshold for Social Workers to do this drops far lower.
- 4.Section 2 of the Crimes Act defines Assault as: "the act of intentionally applying or attempting to apply force to the person of another, directly or indirectly, or threatening by any act or ges-

ture to apply such force to the person of another, if the person making the threat has, or causes the other to believe on reasonable grounds that he has, present ability to effect his purpose." It is very broad and does not require any physical contact. Bradford, Kiro and many others have made clear their intention by rhetorically asking, "If you cannot do it to an adult, why can you do it to a child?"

30 Pieces of Silver Was Too High

The horrendous deaths of the three-month old Kahui twins have caused Parentline chief executive Maxine Hodgson inadvertently to show us her hand. Laying aside these murders, Maxine has been thinking ahead in terms of her organisation's commitment to early pro-active intervention. She has such contempt for the integrity of family units and so little desire to see them preserved, protected, defended and strengthened from within that she is willing to offer the insult of a fish & chip voucher as an incentive to get people to turn families over to agents of the state when they reckon some child abuse is afoot. The real abuse kicks in as soon as state agents start removing children from their homes.

Maxine clearly has a low opinion of the average New Zealander to state that a lousy \$5 voucher is all she thinks it takes to get children to turn on their parents and neighbours to turn on each other. Judas at least had the self-respect to demand 30 pieces of silver before he turned Christ over to the authorities. Maxine reckons betrayal should be such an everyday, low-effort activity, a few greasies should be enough to get past most consciences. As Parentline and other state and state-supported agencies keep rewarding the lowest in human behaviour, there will soon be less and less conscience to which one can appeal. Perhaps that is Maxine's strategy.

Then there is CYFs head Peter

Hughes telling us that the guilty parties are not the hands that bashed these babies, but the rest of us poor plebs, "the community", by which he somehow means Pakeha like me in the Manawatu, you farmers in Southland, stay-at-home mums in Marlborough and retired folks in Tauranga. You people who've never even been to Auckland: did you know these murders are your fault?

It is haughty officialdom, from the Prime Minister down to the local state school teacher, treating both good and bad parents as if they are incompetents, sub-standard as caregivers for their own children, which is facilitating bad parents to fulfil the negative expectations laid on them, and which is causing good parents to wonder at times why they strive so hard.

Parentline's website says they have adopted the Village Solution! Solution to what? This is inserting state and private institutional "experts" between parents and children to "strengthen families"!! It is the Solution to *weaken* strong families by marginalising know-it-all and pesky parents, of whom home educators are the absolute worst, who think they know what is best for their own children and do not eagerly invite every nousey Parker in town to come sit in their lounge and critique their parenting skills.

Why do I reckon only the Village Idiot would let the whole Village raise his child? Because the village contains paedophiles, thieves, rapists, murderers, adulterers, sodomites, blasphemers, liars, the wicked, insolent, haughty, boastful, covetous, malicious, arrogant, deceitful, gossips, slanderers, haters of God, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, Satanists, wiccans, statisticians, internationalists, communists, abortionists, eugenicists, euthanasia fans, porn stars, porn addicts, drunks, heroin/P/marijuana/cocaine/etc. addicts, anti-Christians, haters of home education, etc., etc., etc.: all of whom are also to one degree or another foolish, faithless, heartless and ruthless. I will train my children myself so that they will know what these types are and how to recognise them and why they are harmful and evil. I do not want these swine greasing up to my im-

mature children, ingratiating themselves and causing my children mistakenly to think that such perversions are acceptable.

This is one reason why we home educate. It is not the most important reason and not even one we think about much since we are too busy being focussed on the activities and training that will help us move along the path toward our goals and objectives. But it sure helps us to know we want nothing to do with anti-parent groups like Parentline.

Note:

1. *Waikato Times*, "Dob in abusers, get a reward," 26 June 2006, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3712513a10,00.html>

Fowl School Toilets

It has been so very instructive to sceptics such as myself to read how the state institutions of compulsory attendance (schools) are reacting to this incredibly unlikely avian flu pandemic scare.

First up: schools are not required to have warm water, soap or drying facilities in the toilets. And Principals' Federation President Pat Newman confirmed that most primary schools did not have these things.¹

Can you believe this? Parents have been unknowingly exposing their children – while school staff have knowingly let it happen year after year after year – to an array of faeces-born ailments and diseases by failing to provide the most basic of hygiene requirements. Immediately everyone is subject to getting your basic dysentery, giardia, diarrhoea and worms that most of us know are reasonably common. But poor faecal/oral hygiene can transmit really nasty things like typhoid fever, cholera, hepatitis and polio. These are *real* diseases posing *real* risks.

Education Ministry regional manager Graeme Marshall was at least honest: he said that school toilet blocks varied from "semi-palatial to down-right squalor" and that schools will be particularly effective in spreading any diseases around since "kids snuffle and snort and wipe their noses on their sleeves

and all those sorts of things."¹ Upper Hutt's Plateau Primary School principal Virginia Francis said that children often did not wash their hands because they did not want to spend too much time in the old bathrooms. Gladly a MoE grant enabled them to spruce the toilets up a bit. And with a unit or two on hand washing to prevent spreading bird flu (which isn't even a reality), things are looking up.²

It takes a "virtual" disease to get schools even *to think* about providing the most basic of hygiene facilities. Hey, are the staff toilets are any better? I'm not sure which would be worse: finding out that they are, revealing a thoroughly entrenched "We don't care about you kids" attitude...or learning that they are just as bad! Yuk!

I'll continue to home educate, thanks.

Notes:

1. *Dominion Post*, "Pandemic fears force school hygiene review," 27 January 2006, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3552680a7694,00.html>
2. *Dominion Post*, "Schools tap into ways to fight bird flu," 8 March 2006, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3596304a7694,00.html>

A Suggestion to Combat Burnout

We hear a lot today about burnout in homeschooling. "I lie in bed at night and dread the thought of starting school the next day.... A life of drudgery is not what I envisioned a few short months ago... It's such a struggle to get the kids to do anything."

The only time I disliked homeschooling was from 1980-83, the first three years that we formally homeschooled and were following a rigid correspondence type curriculum. There was a pile of workbooks to get through each day, a long list of subjects to check off on my notepad, a schedule to keep, and all that in addition to the normal things which must be accomplished in the home, such as changing diapers, cooking and cleaning.

By 1983 I was so thoroughly tired of the schooling routine, and our oldest had become so reluctant to do school, that we threw out the school-in-a-box, and the Lord began to show us a different way. The first change I made was to start reading to the children not just the baby picture books (although we still read those), but the long chapter books, the books I wanted to read, like *Treasure Island*, the works of Jules Verne and the *Little House* series by Laura Ingles Wilder. At the beginning the babies didn't get anything out of the reading, but the older ones loved it. Yet I suppose the person who loved it the most was me. Through the years I read to them all the books I had always wanted to read but never had the time, and I certainly paid no attention to grade level. I read to my own grade level. And they learned to love reading because they saw how much pleasure it gave me.

I soon learned to apply that same philosophy to other areas as well and pursued an education for myself, bringing the children along side me. Many days were spent in libraries, both local and university level, with the children helping me do research on our current topic and the baby playing beside us in a laundry basket (strollers weren't allowed). We must have been a strange sight to the college students. Yes, we did the grammar and math like we were supposed to, but we majored on projects: history and science projects, learning writing skills and much more in the process.

If you are not enjoying the adventure of homeschooling, and it truly is an adventure, but are rather seeing it as a job which must be endured, perhaps you might consider changing your perspective. Look on homeschooling as primarily an opportunity to educate yourself and bring the kids along side.

(By Laurie Bluedorn, co-author with husband Harvey of *Teaching the Trivium*, www.TriviumPursuit.com)

Stay up with Section 59 events and what to do:

1. Subscribe to Family Integrity e-bulletins at: Family.Integrity@xtra.co.nz
2. Visit www.FamilyIntegrity.org.nz and see "Coming Events".

Working for a Dirty, Rotten Son-of-a-gun

This exchange was posted last year on an email list of the leaders of large home education groups in the USA:

In Iowa, there is a morning talk show host who regularly stands up for homeschooling. It is a real blessing. He is not a homeschooler (his child is grown), and he used to be a government school teacher (I believe high school). On the first day of our conference this summer, his whole 2 ½ hour program ended up being about homeschooling. You'll like his answers to the last two callers...it went something like this:

Caller 1: If we can get them [homeschoolers] back into the mainstream, hopefully they will expose themselves to people who don't have a good background, and those people will say, "Gee, I want to be like them."

Host: That's not the function of education. Decent education is to prepare the student and give him the highest preparation possible. I don't see any virtue in exposing kids at the earliest level to debased people. I would prefer them to use that irreplaceable resource — their life, their time, that moment in their life — to absorb as much education and virtue as possible. Their function in life at that time is not to be a good influence on the neighbor's urchin, but to get as much out of the academic experience as possible.

Caller 2: We cocoon these kids. They only see other homeschoolers or people in church. If we cocoon these children, how do they handle going out and working for a dirty rotten son-of-a-gun?

Host: Hopefully by going out the front door and not working for an ethically impaired dirty rotten son-of-a-gun.

Caller 2: So you're going to eliminate them from working in manufacturing, construction, trucking and on and on and on?

Host: What I am going to try to do is get them to *own* the trucking and

Coming Events

For updates on this information, see www.hef.org.nz and click Coming Events

Fri-Sun 25-27 Aug 06

Patchwork of Grace Christian Homeschool Mothers' Retreat Waikanae

Venue: Elm Court, Waikanae
Christian Holiday Park

Speaker: Rosie Boom, www.boomfamily.co.nz.

Also several workshops on a variety of relevant topics. Take some time aside to be refreshed, inspired and treated specially in your unique role. Electronic and printed brochures are available with programme details, accommodation and day visitor prices. Places for full-time accommodation are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment. Mums with nursing babies are welcomed.

Contact: Sara McDonnell, ph. (04) 567-3730, conradand-sara@xtra.co.nz or Gayle MacDonald, ph. (04) 388-7690, gayleandpaul@maxnet.co.nz.

manufacturing and everything else, so those industries aren't dominated by low-life, knuckle-dragging son-of-a-guns. I'm not looking for them to participate in the culture, I want them to own culture and redefine it.¹

Then came this post:

Wes exclusively hires homeschool graduates on his construction jobs. The other employers ask him, "Where did you find these guys!?" They actually keep working when you're gone."

Some other 'salty' workers came up after work to apologize to our employees for their music!

Just recently in Salem (Oregon), a Chinese restaurant put out a "help wanted" for a homeschooler. That's all they want to hire.²

And this was posted last:

Fri 1 Sept 2006

"Spring into History" History Fair Auckland

Venue: Mangere Memorial Hall,
Dominion Road, Mangere
Bridge

Cost: \$5 for one or two exhibits in family;
\$10 for three or more exhibits in family;
\$2 entry for those just observing

Contact: Katie Richards,
grinders@ihug.co.nz, 220 St
Andrews Rd., Epsom

*Please Register by
Friday 4 August 2006*

9:00am doors open to set up

10:00am exhibit - judges will circulate at this time

12:00pm prize giving

12:30 - 2:00pm lunch/chat/cleanup.

Those participating will choose a history topic: a particular time period, the history of a people group/person or the history of a subject (e.g. the history of the English language).

16-21 October 2006

Home Education Awareness Week

Last year when giving a talk at an Arkansas homeschooling conference I was asked this question. How would you answer it?

"Is it better to home school in the early grades and put your child in public school in the later grades or the other way around? You see, I think it is important to have them in public school for a few years so they will get used to the backstabbing and politics that they'll face in the corporate world."³

Notes:

1. John & Diane Desaulniers, Network of Iowa Christian Home Educators (NICHE)
2. Deborah Butler, Oregon Christian Home Education Association Network
3. Dr Fred Worth, Henderson State University, Arkansas