

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 3

March 1997

Annual Reports

On 20 February 1997, TEACH Bulletin wrote to Kathy Phillips, Senior Manager of National Operations of the Ministry of Education in Wellington asking the following questions:

1. Now that the ERO is going to be doing reviews on home schoolers again, will the annual self-evaluation reports become a thing of the past, or will the ERO reviews be in addition to the reports?
2. How did this first round of annual self-evaluation reports go? Did the MOE receive the level of compliance it was looking for?
3. How many reports and/or non-compliants were referred to the ERO for a follow up review?
4. As a result of the Ministry's experience with annual reports and the re-introduction of ERO reviews, does the Ministry foresee any change in its policies and practices regarding the granting of exemption certificates?

On 28 February the following reply was received:

Thank you for your letter of 20 February 1997 concerning various issues related to the monitoring of homeschooling. The answers to your specific questions are as follows:

1 The Ministry has always made it clear that the annual self-evaluation report is a response to the present situation where there are no regular ERO reviews. If regular monitoring by ERO were to be re-introduced, then the need for the annual self-evaluation report would disappear.

As you appear to have heard, the announced education policies of the new Coalition Government contain the following sentence: "To maintain quality, the Government will move to introduce Education Review Office reviews of home schooling". At this stage the Ministry has no details about the form of review that is envisaged, how often the review will occur or when the policy will come into operation. No doubt, things will become clear in due course.

Depending on the answers to the above questions, there may be no continuing need for the annual self evaluation report. On the assumption, however, that a written report will be needed in November 1997, the Ministry advises that the same format will operate as last year, with the exception that the two subject areas to be reported on will be Social Studies and Science.

2 The annual self-evaluation reporting exercise worked very well last year. The overwhelming proportion of replies showed that homeschoolers remain focussed on the programme they undertook to deliver at the time of application. Very few reports gave the Ministry cause for concern. The response rate was around 80% in most areas of the country, though a lower level of response in the Auckland/Northland area has meant that the national response rate has been 70.8%. Of the letters sent to parents, 4.6% were returned by NZ Post, stamped "not known at this address". No reply of any kind was received from 22.9% of parents while 1.7% of parents replied but refused to supply a self-evaluation report. These statistics were compiled at the end

of January. Other reports have been received since then.

3 Of the reports received, 90 were referred to the national evaluation panel. Following evaluation of these, 20 families have been referred to ERO for review.

4 The Ministry does not foresee any change to procedures for granting certificates of exemption either as a result of our experience with the self-evaluation report or because of the reintroduction of ERO monitoring.

A Meeting with the Ministry

On the last day of February 1997, a number of home schoolers met with Senior Managers Kathy Phillips and Derek Miller of the MOE in their offices in Wellington. Those home schoolers were:

Christina Coward from Wellington Home Educators, Michele Garrett and Kathy Lane from Auckland, Kate Jaunay from HENA (Home Educators' Network of Aotearoa), Craig Smith from CHomeS (Christian Home Schoolers of New Zealand) and TEACH (Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home) and Barbara Smith from Manawatu Home Educators.

The AIM of the meeting was to let the Ministry of Education know that there were a lot more groups involved with Home Schooling around New Zealand, National and Local.

The home schoolers made it clear that none were there as representatives, but mainly to carry first-hand information back to their respective groups. It was said that no one person or organisation can

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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 suggested donation of \$16 per year for 11 issues (none in December), or by becoming a member of TEACH for a suggested donation of \$30. Some of the benefits of membership are:

- Discounts on Christian Home Schoolers of NZ National Family Conference fees.
- Discounts on TEACH National Leadership Conference 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:

The Editor
Craig S. Smith
4 Tawa St.
Palmerston North 5301
New Zealand
Fax: +64 6 357-4399

Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching.

— Proverbs 1:8

represent Home Educators because they are all different and very much individuals.

The ministry said they were very happy to send out information to groups with newsletters so that initiatives being proposed might become widely known. Individual home schoolers could then respond directly to the MOE. This would illustrate the diversity and commitment of home educators better than a single letter endorsed by several people. It was then recommended that as many home school support groups as wanted should be advised to contact the MOE, National Operations, Private Box 1666, Wellington, asking to be put on their mailing list.

The second AIM was to try to heal some of the bad feelings generated over the reports at the end of last year. The Ministry was reasonably impressed with the reports they did receive back and on the whole thought that Home Educators were teaching to a high standard.

Some other items mentioned during the meeting:

Auckland exemption forms are different to the rest of the country for they are asked to give an example of how they would teach a particular topic. This is to enable the Ministry to better judge that the child will be taught "at least as regularly and as well as in a registered school". Therefore, the more specific the better. If this works in Auckland then the Ministry will consider changing the exemption forms for the rest of the country.

The ministry is not judging the academic attainment of the child, but is trying to see the parents' educational ability.

Teaching must evolve. They would be more worried if home schoolers didn't change (as a result of their teaching experiences) from what was initially written in exemption applications and an-

nual reports.

Derek said that if it was up to him and the ERO reviews come back, he would "drop the reports like a hot scone".

Why couldn't people using "package deal" curriculum with tutors or administrators overseeing the work simply be vouched for by them to the MOE? Derek said the MOE cannot be seen to be endorsing a particular commercial enterprise. "The Ministry, if you like, is licensing homeschoolers, they do not license the programmes the homeschoolers use".

The meeting ended on a very friendly note.

Time with the ERO

While in Wellington on the last day of February, the same home schoolers mentioned in the previous article met with Tony Crofts, the National Manager of Reporting Services, Education Review Office.

Although Tony will be replaced by Karen Sewell on April 1, he said that the ERO wants to establish a regular dialogue with home schooling groups. "We realise that there can be no one voice for homeschooling because of the diversity of people involved. At present we have liaison with 32 institutions who meet six-monthly with us, usually in Wellington. We need to meet as many groups as possible." These liaison groups discuss issues, and are organised by Jenny Clark, manager of public relations for the ERO. Judith Aiken, the Chief Executive, likes to attend when that's possible. Tony urged home schooling support groups to contact the ERO to get onto their mailing list and also to see about attending their liaison meetings, if interested.

Contact: Jenny Clark, Manager of Public Relations, ERO, PO Box 2799, Wellington, ph. (04) 499-2489 and fax (04) 499-2482.

TEACH Leadership Conference

Fifteen people gathered in Island Bay, Wellington for a power-packed day and a half of talks on a wide range of issues. They came from Auckland, Hamilton, New Plymouth, Palmerston North and the Wellington area, with apologies from Hamilton and Christchurch. By Sunday morning, most were exhausted, but still not talked out!

Friday evening, 28 February, was spent in reporting about the meetings held with the MOE and the ERO, a discussion about the home schooling situation in Auckland, and setting the agenda for Saturday, which finally included:

- Dealing with support group growth issues, meeting on common ground, conflicting personalities and a buddy system.
 - Steven Coward of Wellington gave an excellent presentation on how to go about applying for grants. Some said that was worth the whole weekend.
 - Avoiding burnout by focussing on the primary task: to educate children, not necessarily run support groups.
 - Dorinda Duthie of Auckland outlined one-day or 1/2-day seminars as an inexpensive and easy way to get a lot of good information to a lot of people.
 - ID cards for home schoolers, an idea from THEN in Hamilton, to combat being mistaken for truants.
 - A proposal that 20-26 October be designated "National Home Education Awareness Week" has been confirmed by the Internal Affairs Department.
 - Public Relations and the Media.
 - Becoming Politically active.
 - Phone trees and newsletters.
 - Children's newsletters.
 - Establishing resource libraries.
- Next year's TEACH leadership conference will have a good base on which to build.

New Zealand Education & Scholarship Trust

The NZEST was founded in 1991 by a group of teachers in response to the Government's abolition of state scholarship exams in 1989. NZEST is an independent examining body, free from political control, sponsored by the business community. The exams are based on the NZQA bursary syllabus, but set at an extended level to stimulate and challenge the most able students. Scholarship awards available: 20 at \$1,000; 67 at \$500; 150 at \$150. Subjects: Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Classical Studies, Economics, English, French, Geography, German, History, History of Art, Japanese, Latin, Maori, Maths with Calculus, Maths with Statistics, Physics. Exam fees: ranging from \$25 to \$170 depending upon the number of subjects sat and/or financial assistance required. Exams are held 5-14 November 1997, and applications must be in by 16 May.

Contact: Sarah Taylor, Executive Officer, NZEST, PO Box 22012, Otahuhu, Auckland 6. Ph. (09) 270-0480, Fax (09) 270-0481, Email nzest@kings.ak.school.nz.

USA Study Gives Home Schoolers High Marks

Home schooled students perform significantly better than their public school counterparts on standard achievement tests, according to a national study released recently by Dr Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute in Oregon state. Test scores collected from 5,402 home school students in 1,657 families nation wide averaged in the 87th percentile. That means their average score was higher than 87% of all students taking the test. The results also showed that neither the parents' educational background nor their family income significantly affected the scores.

(From the *Fresno Bee*, Fresno, Calif., March 1997.)

The Azariah Network

This support network was started by Christians to work together in seeking to limit the encroachment of the state into the education of children. Key objectives include:

- Return of the control of financing education into the hands of parents directly.
- Repeal of the ban on corporal correction in private schools.
- Repeal of the imposition of compulsory teacher registration for private schools.
- Recognition in New Zealand law of the primacy of the responsibility of the parents in the education of their children.
- Exposing the myth of religious neutrality in education.
- Providing a network of people from home educating and Christian school backgrounds to support and encourage one another.

Contact: The Secretary, PO Box 43-127, Wainuiomata, Email: azariah@clear.net.nz.

Schools the Academic Equivalent of Slow Death to Gifted Children

Sally Reis, a leading expert in gifted education, states that without special programmes these children become "content to coast" and "surrender to boredom"....Without the challenge, school may be what Reis (as cited in Meade, 1991) calls the "academic equivalent of a slow death."

(Tracy L. Riley, Massey University, "Gifted Education" in *New Zealand Principal*, Vol 11, No 4, Nov 1996, p. 18.)

Results of the TEACH Bulletin Opinion Poll #1

What is your view regarding your home schooling accountability to the MOE?

This poll was sent out to nearly 1300 home schoolers all over New Zealand in January 1997. The following is a summary of the 117 responses received by mid March. A note with the poll indicated that the results would be available by February, so many, having put the poll aside, would have returned to it in February and decided it was too late to fill out. These results have been forwarded to the MOE and the ERO. (Response summaries are underlined.)

1. I am happy to submit to whatever accountability procedure the MOE asks of me:
7 or 6% a) as long as I still receive the supervisory allowance.
15 or 12.8% b) even if there is no supervisory allowance.
99 or 84.6% c) no, I may not be happy to submit to some things the MOE may ask.
2. I am happy to go along with some kind of accountability procedure:
102 or 87.2% a) as long as it is reasonable or not too intrusive.
6 or 5.1% b) as long as I still receive the supervisory allowance.
14 or 12% c) no, I do not think I need to be accountable to the MOE.
3. I am happy for an ERO officer to review our home education operation:
87 or 74.4% a) in my home.
6 or 5.1% b) privately in some other venue besides my home.
8 or 6.8% c) at a larger venue with other home schooling families all being reviewed at once.
13 or 11.1% d) no, I am not happy about being reviewed by the ERO.
4. If the supervisory allowance was stopped:
106 or 90.6% a) I would continue to home school, without hesitation.
9 or 7.7% b) I would have to re-evaluate whether to continue home schooling or not.
0 or 0% c) I would definitely have to stop home schooling.
5. My response to writing the 1 to 2 page reports for each of my children being home schooled as requested by the MOE in 1996 is:
30 or 25.6% a) that I am quite happy to do it.
22 or 18.8% b) that I would be happy to write reports that are not as detailed as what was requested.
62 or 53% c) that I am not happy about writing reports, but will do it if required.
6 or 5.1% d) that I will do all I can not to write a report, perhaps even flatly refuse.
6. Once the exemption certificate has been approved for one child, that approval should automatically be extended to other children in the same family, provided there are no disabilities involved.
71 or 60.7% a) I agree.
42 or 35.9% b) I disagree.
7. Once the exemption certificate has been approved for one child, that approval should automatically be extended to other children in the same family, whether there are any disabilities involved or not.
93 or 79.5% a) I agree.
19 or 16.2% b) I disagree.
8. Once the exemption certificate has been approved, there really is no need for any reviews or reports, unless the MOE receives a complaint.
47 or 40.2% a) I agree.
63 or 53.8% b) I disagree.
9. The MOE should make the NZ Correspondence School available to home schoolers free of charge.
94 or 80.3% a) I agree.
18 or 15.4% b) I disagree.

It would be great to re-print all the comments people wrote, but that is too big a job. The origin of 114 of the 117 could be determined: about 3/4 came from the North Island, 1/4 from the South Island. Every province of the country was represented, with good showings from Auckland (22), Bay of Plenty (14), Manawatu (12), and Waikato (10). Low numbers came from the West Coast (1), Wellington (2), Wairarapa (2), and Southland (4). The figures above don't add up because some questions occasionally attracted more than one answer, other questions were sometimes not answered at all. It was good to see that we appear to be most united in our determination to continue home schooling, even without state funding (question 4). We seemed least united in our response to writing the reports (question 5), with just over 1/2 (53%) not happy about doing it, but willing if required, while a significant 1/4 were quite happy to write them. Another significant divergence of opinion was whether we needed on-going reviews (question 8): 53.8% said we do not need them (unless there is a complaint), and 40.2% disagreed with that stance. There was a bit of confusion over questions 6 & 7, but it was probably the logic involved in the wording and juxtaposition of the two statements. Home schoolers seem overall happy with some kind of accountability procedure (87.2% question 2). They also want to see the NZ Correspondence School lessons freely available (80.3%, question 9).