

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 49

May 2001

NCEA: Record of Academic Achievement or Recipe for Academic Anorexia?

[In a *TEACH Bulletin* postal survey of 286 home educators in October last year, just over 1/4 of respondents reckoned access to the soon-to-be introduced NCEA secondary qualification (replacing School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and Bursary) was either “absolutely essential” or “very important”. Following is a complete article by John Morris, headmaster of Auckland Grammar School, plus several extracts from elsewhere as supporting evidence. Although David Hood (article p. 1) appears to argue that Mr Morris is only interested in maintaining the status quo, both men are clearly saying that much of what is done in the state schooling system, the NCEA in particular, is not backed up by research but by politics and ideologies.]

Next year a new era of school qualifications will begin. This should be a really positive development, but I fear this is not how history will judge the new National Certificate of Educational Achievement. An extraordinary feature of this change that will affect generations of students is that very few, not even the PPTA or the Minister of Education himself, want it in its proposed form. Few are still enthusiastic about it. Many teachers are worried and uncertain. The national certificate will be launched on to a largely unsuspecting student cohort with, at most, lukewarm support from those who will teach and assess it. The vast majority of parents will be confused by it.

The range of opposition is impressive. According to a Herald

report, 20 schools are looking to set up a trust to run a separate qualification system. Auckland Grammar School and 50 other schools have a concerted interest in the Cambridge University international exams. At least one university in New Zealand has discussed setting up its own entrance exams. The activist and arch-defender of state education, John Minto, has expressed doubts about the national certificate. Low-decile schools have gone public against a scheme designed to help those very schools. The minister has said he is not happy

with aspects of it. A group called Concerned Teachers has been set up to fight it.

A second striking feature is that the national certificate appears to have no expert educational support. All the research papers of which I am aware have condemned it. Several New Zealand educationalists, including assessment experts Cedric Hall and Warwick Elley, have identified serious weaknesses. International experts, writing in reports published by the Education Forum, have also criticised it. Officials in the Ministry of Education and the Qualifications Authority seem incapable of effective response.

A third feature of the situation is

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NZ Schooling: Out of Date and Out of Touch

David Hood knows the NZ School system inside out. Thirty-eight years worth of involvement have taken him from teacher and principal to titled positions within both the MoE and ERO, then time in the NZQA as its foundation Chief Executive. He wrote *Our Secondary Schools Don't Work Anymore* (Profile Books) and did some more straight-talking as the opening speaker at the Speld New Zealand conference in the middle of March this year.

One of the main points of his speech then was that “decisions in education are not necessarily made on the basis of logic or common sense or research evidence”. As refreshing as such a statement is, be aware that he is not the first to say such things. Dr Colin Knight, then Christchurch Teachers' College principal, was

quoted in the *Manawatu Evening Standard* of 4 December 1990 as saying, “It is of serious concern to me that, despite the far-reaching effects of teaching on society, few educational practices have a sound research basis.” He said changes in schools were mainly brought about by politically initiated reviews, reports on questionnaires, Gallup polls, by parliamentary debate and political expediency. Dr Knight is actually reported as having said that such government-decreed practices in schools could socially, emotionally and intellectually deform children. The man was prophetic.

Mr Hood said NZ has a schooling system designed according to Taylorist principles of industrialism, which were pretty hot ideas in the early 1900s, but

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that nobody is quite certain about important aspects of the scheme - a factor that is hardly surprising because of the frequent shifts in policy. The development of the national certificate continues in an *ad hoc* fashion. The minister himself has instigated changes that he calls "political", not educational. The Leaders Forum has come up with compromise proposals that suddenly become part of the scheme but have no educational or research underpinnings.

The recent announcement that subject marks will be reported is a classic example of political compromise. But it will end up pleasing no one. It won't please those who were enthusiastic about the original concept because, as they correctly point out, marks don't fit within a scheme in which assessments are against standards; it won't please the critics who point out that the introduction of marks is not only inconsistent but, more importantly, won't address basic design faults.

We are advancing (or should I say retreating) into the unknown --

into a scheme which has not been tested, which has no successful international precedent, and about which there is much informed criticism. This year's fourth-formers will be the guinea-pigs in this expensive experiment. They and all subsequent cohorts will, if we are not careful, emerge from secondary schooling with academic anorexia and worthless qualifications.

As the headmaster of Auckland Grammar School, whatever I say on educational issues tends to be denigrated by the small elite running school education as rantings typical of the headmaster of an archaic and draconian school. I reject such descriptions, but I am deeply concerned at the de-education of New Zealand that will be hastened by the implementation of the national certificate.

The certificate has many problems:

* The ideological refusal to accept that much assessment requires inter-student comparisons and the consequent attempt to define all education in terms of "standards"

* The lack of a national policy on reassessment

* Unacceptably low levels of assessment reliability

* Limited moderation and lack of consequences for schools making incorrect internal assessments

* Lack of comparability of student assessment between schools and subjects and of qualifications over time

* Use of only four grades

* Difficulties in establishing the authenticity of a student's work

* Workload and assessment overload.

Any one of these could prove to be the Achilles heel, the weakness that brings the whole system to its knees. How could a qualification with so many fundamental weaknesses ever be seriously considered? It is as if so much energy, time and money has gone into the project that it will be introduced next year regardless of the harmful effects on the education and life chances of our children.

Surely it is absurd to continue with a scheme with no expert support, many serious but unanswered criticisms, no international precedent or local testing, and which, in fact, few now seem to want.

At this late stage the best step would be to postpone the introduction of the national certificate indefinitely, continue with existing qualifications, and go back to the drawing board using the best local and international expertise available. The present system does need reform, but the National Certificate of Educational Achievement would make the situation far worse.

(NZ Herald on line, 15 May 2001, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=188835>. Used by permission.)

Schools Rebel Against NCEA

A core group of up to 20 schools are investigating running their own exams next year because staff are worried that the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) will have no credibility overseas and fail to identify the capabilities of each student.

Principal Byron Bentley of Macleans College in Bucklands Beach said, "The NCEA is just

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TEACH Bulletin

is a monthly publication of the Home Education Foundation, 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. Information herein is not to be construed as legal advice. Opinions expressed in TEACH Bulletin are those of the writer and should not be assumed to reflect those of the Home Education Foundation Trustees or Board of Reference Members.

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

Trading Post



Wanted:

Saxon Maths 65, text & questions
Saxon Maths 76, answer books.
Saxon Maths 87, text & answers

Contact:

Margaret
ph. (03) 206-6476

Wanted:

Patchwork of Days, a book telling of a day in the life of 30 different home educators

Contact:

Johanna
ph. (03) 314-7464

For Sale:

McGuffey's Eclectic Readers -
Complete boxed Set including
Speller (as new).....\$85
How to Teach Any Child to Spell
by Gayle Graham - Student
Notebook plus teachers manual.....\$23

Contact:

Trish
ph. (09) 423-8477

For Sale:

Simply Grammar by Charlotte
Mason, as new.....\$30
English for the Thoughtful Child
by Greenleaf Press, as new\$30
A Charlotte Mason Companion
by Karen Andreola, as new\$50
Write Well workbook for Grammar, Punctuation, and Usage
(Australian), as new.....\$10
ABeka's Science: Order and Reality test and study book....\$10
Quiz book.....\$7
Teacher Keys for above....\$7 each

Wanted:

Harvey's Grammar

Contact:

Susan
ph. (06) 344-3349

Wanted:

Saxon Maths 1/2 Algebra

Contact:

Carol
ph. (03) 434-2243
wickham@family.net.nz

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which Mr Hood says "can no longer be justified." "Selection, not learning, was its over-riding objective; its purpose to progressively sift out the 15 or 20% who would become the professionals, administrators and managers -- the decision makers -- of the industrial age." Ideas about human intelligence at the time meant one could be "classified as a competent scholar if you got 51%, and a learning failure if you got 49%. Those children who did not learn in the expected way, according to the rules, were assumed to have some kind of learning defect. The consequences of such practices and the beliefs that underpin them have been horrendous for generations of young people, and for New Zealand."

No wonder, says Mr Hood, there are today "increasing numbers of parents, and teachers, and students who are asking serious questions about the appropriateness of a model of education designed for a world that no longer exists."

Home educators will be happy to note that Mr Hood acknowledges that everyone has unique learning, thinking and working styles, and that conventional schooling is not able to suit many individuals, although it is his desire and challenge to modern educators to find ways of improving public schooling so that it does suit virtually everyone. He pointed out the tragedy of increasing numbers of children being diagnosed with a range of learning difficulties when research shows that many of those children can learn successfully when their learning environment is changed. It is just this kind of flexibility which the home education environment offers and why increasing numbers of parents with special needs children are taking it up.

Further, Marilyn Davies of the NZ Employers Federation said, "The Employers' Federation's 1991 survey of 400 companies about the usefulness of School Certificate as a recruiting and selecting device, showed that SC results did not convey information

on essential work and life skills such as team work, listening, customer skills, positive attitude and other personal attributes, or the abilities to use information effectively, to assimilate and apply complex material or to impart skills to others. Exam marks are limited in what they reveal about the one examined. Written exams do assess how one retains facts, reads, comprehends and presents information in written form under time pressure. Many of the higher order skills related to problem solving and critical thinking, as well as creative and practical skills cannot be assessed in this way."

(9 March 2001, <http://www.theschooldaily.com/articleView.asp?articlePK=5685>)

A checklist of factors that make learning more effective and successful was presented and said to be backed up by both research and experience. Experienced home educators are certainly very familiar with these factors, and it is good to see them enumerated and verified by Mr Hood:

- When students are involved in decisions about what to learn and the how to learn, in the setting of learning goals and in the setting of "rules" that govern behaviour and practice.
- When learning is connected to the world in which students live their lives, and to their abilities, interests and culture.
- When learning recognises the individual nature of intelligence and learning style.
- When students receive continuous feedback, including (and importantly) from external audiences, and when evaluation is integrated with the student's own learning.
- When learning is seen as a collaborative rather than a competitive process.
- When the teacher acts as facilitator, coach and mentor, rather than as a knowledge expert i.e. when learning is seen as a partnership based on

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mutual respect.

- When the teacher has high expectations of every student i.e. expects high quality, excellent work from all students.
- When the teacher is passionate about learning, and demonstrates that he /she is a learner.
- When parents are actively involved in their children's learning.

The Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) recently stumbled on a programme called Challenge for Change, which pairs troubled young teens with older "mentors". Apparently this idea of mentoring, which is the normal set up in a home educating situation, has been so successful that CYFS Wellington youth justice co-ordinator Allan MacRae said the scheme was partly responsible for a dramatic drop in the Capital's youth crime.

And according to the *Timaru Herald* on the 18th of this month, there is someone else actually working on Mr Hood's ideas. "Traditional schooling in New Zealand is outdated and should be replaced with a system catering for individual student needs," said educationalist Perry Rush, director of Discovery One, a new special-character primary school which will open in Christchurch in term four. "The standard 'one size fits all' approach with its formula for learning – and learning in classroom boxes – does not work for everyone. I am very concerned that children are all learning the same things when each child is so diverse. We need individual programmes which cater for individual needs."

Mr Rush said learning happened everywhere – not just in the classroom. Students at Discovery One will be encouraged to work on their own projects and work with businesses and the community, with essential input from the parents. This sounds just like standard promotional material for home education! – except it's not at home and there is a team of state teachers interposed between

parents and children. So why does no one of the radical reformers such as Mr Hood or Mr Rush suggest the replacement of a central location with the home and replacing a state-certified teacher with the parents, especially in these days of remarkable advances in educational technology and distance education? It surely has to do with a remarkably candid statement by then PPTA head Phillip Capper in the *Dominion Sunday Times* of 14 October 1990: "What I would like to see in the political debate about education is a recognition that public education is an exercise in social engineering by definition."

(Parts extracted from TheSchoolDaily, 25 May 2001, *Schooling – Is It a Bridge or a Barrier to Learning?* <http://www.theschooldaily.com/articleView.asp?articlePK=6544>)

Home Education Foundation Speaking Tour of Northland

From early Friday 27 April until late Monday 7 May, we (Craig & Barbara Smith, and four of our six children: Alanson 17, Charmagne 14, Jeremiah 9 & Jedediah 3) did a tour of points north which took in Home Educators (HEs) at Hamilton, Auckland, North Shore, Ahipara, Kaikohe, Hikurangi, Whangarei, Clevedon, Raglan and Te Pahu.

The meetings included our sixth annual TEACH (Leadership) Forum in Ellerslie. Twelve of us discussed a range of HE issues from 9:30am until 3pm. The TEACH Forum has traditionally determined the dates for the National Home Education Awareness Week. For 2001 the week is from 15 October. Barbara is putting together a pack of activity ideas for the week. Local HE Support Groups are encouraged to put together lists of their favourite books on HE and endeavour to get these onto their local library's shelves. Exemption and Review issues were discussed and Craig hopes to publish guidelines relating to both.

The meeting in Ahipara, near

Kaitaia, saw 11 families gather from morning until late at night talking over all aspects of HE, accommodating quite a range of philosophical perspectives. Before we left on Wednesday, heading for Cape Reinga, we loaded up several boxes of unused phonics curricula which we distributed to Support Groups on the rest of the journey and will also distribute in the South Island in June.

The Kaikohe meeting included sharing a common lunch with about 10 family groups interested in HE who were apparently meeting together for the first time! Around 23 people gathered in Whangarei for coffee and dessert....and to learn more about HE! We were very encouraged by the uniformly positive experiences people here have had with ERO reviews. The final meeting was another one of those well-organised HE workshops by the Shore Home Educators with a wide range of electives to attend and a good selection of curriculum and resource vendors to inspect.

We stayed away for 10 nights, one at a camp ground among the mosquitoes in Houhora, and the other nine with six different HE families, calling in to visit five other HE families along the way, and of course meeting dozens of others at the meetings. The conversations were generally centred around curriculum, second-hand books and children's learning and development! (Whenever we speak to school teachers, the conversation is usually about administrative and behaviour problems.)

Thanks so much to those who support the Home Education Foundation and to all who shared their homes with us for making this tour possible. We thoroughly enjoyed every minute we spent in the presence of the most colourful and enjoyable people in New Zealand: home educators!

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not up to scratch and we need to do something." The school was investigating the possibility of setting up a trust to administer a new qualifications system, which would need approval from the Ministry of Education and would essentially mirror School Certificate.

(From NZ Herald Online, 3 April 2001, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=180757&thesection=news&thesubsection=general>)

NCEA Grade Averages

Education Minister Trevor Mallard told secondary principals meeting in Wellington on 29 March:

- That the new NCEA would include exams at year 11, 12 and 13.
- That the proportion of assessment to be carried out by external as opposed to internal assessment has been raised from 50 to 60%.
- That a literacy and numeracy "benchmark" has been introduced to ensure no student can obtain a senior school qualification without foundation skills in both these areas.

"Today I am also confirming that the end of year reporting of the certificate will include a grade average. Personally, I think that the information that will sit behind that mark will be more useful - especially to employers and to determine access into restricted tertiary courses.

"I know many purists of the assessment based model will see the information as useless. However, the feedback from parents is that they would also like a number to indicate their child's overall performance in each subject.

"In the early stages, it is important to help people feel comfortable with the new system. It shouldn't look too different and that is why I think the number should be

expressed out of 100. It is something that I would want to review in about five years time to see if it is still wanted," Trevor Mallard said.

(Ministerial Announcements, 29 March 2001, mallard-releases@executive.govt.nz.)

Grade Averages Political

The decision [about introducing grade averages] has been criticised by some principals, the secondary teachers' union and the Opposition. But those in the tertiary sector have welcomed the introduction of a grade average, saying it will help identify top students.

The grade average will be worked out by a series of complex calculations.

Jen McCutcheon, president of the PPTA, said the grade average appeared to be driven by "political reasons" and was "educationally unsound."

(NZ Herald Online, 30 March 2001, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=180073&thesection=news&thesubsection=general>)

(There follows a segment of Kim Hill Radio interview [KHR] with Education Minister, Trevor Mallard [TM] and Principal of Rangitoto College, Alan Peachey [AP], 29 April 2001):

TM (Regarding the grade averages on NCEA reports): No, I think in the end it won't hurt the education system. It will mean that there's some information on certificates which is not that useful for many people. A bit of extra information I think in the end won't hurt anyone. It's a question of how long we keep that extra information on them for.

KHR: So just let me get this right, Mr Mallard. You're saying that it's virtually worthless, but if this is the way to get the NCEA out there and running, then you're prepared to do it?

TM: I'm not saying it's virtually

worthless. Some people think it's very valuable. I'm not in that group, but yes, I'm prepared to have that extra information on the certificate in order to...for a period of time in order to make people happier with it and not disrupt it.

KHR: Well, Mr Peachey, where does this leave you? I mean, all this is in the arcane realm of politics, I suppose. There you are trying to run the school....

AP: I can only express the frustration that I've already mentioned this morning. I just think it's a tragedy for the development of education in this country that we are making these sort of decisions on political grounds. And I just think it is most unfortunate that we don't seem to be able to build on what went before and we've always got to have one eye on the interest of the politicians.

TM: I agree with you.

National Libraries

The \$3 postal deal for returning borrowed books mentioned in last month's *TEACH Bulletin* is only available to clients of the PN centre. Home educators will have to contact the other centres to find out the best way of returning loans to those centres. The editor apologises for the misinformation.

National Library locations and service boundaries are:

Auckland Centre: (Northland, Auckland, BOP, Hamilton, Taupo)

83 Remuera Rd

Private Bag 99936, Newmarket
akreq@natlib.govt.nz

Free Phone: 0800 356 000

Free Fax: 0800 356 001

Hamilton Centre: (Only serves clients who are able to walk in and select their own books)

138 Dey St

Private Bag 3084, Hamilton

Telephone: (07) 856-9135

Facsimile: (07) 856-7141

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Coming Events

South Island Home Education Tour

Featured speakers: Craig & Barbara Smith plus local experts.

Tue June 19 Wellington-Picton

Tue June 19 Nelson

Contact Phillipa, (03) 522-4213 p. ashton@xtra.co.nz

or Kathy, ph. (03) 522-4291

Stoke Baptist Ch. Hall, Main Rd.

3:30pm registration. Creche avail.

4:00pm Introduction to Home Education - information for those thinking about Home Education and motivational for those already Home Educating. This includes a Question and Answer time.

5:30pm Pot Providence tea: please bring a plate of finger food

6:30pm Two elective sessions

Elective one with Craig - The Fathers Role and a Vision for the Future.

Elective two with Barbara - Home educating through secondary and preparing for tertiary education and the workforce.

8:00 Supper

Wed June 20 Hokitika

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Palmerston North Centre:

(Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Wairarapa, Wellington, Horowhenua, Manawatu)

1009 Tremaine Ave

Private Bag 11032

Palmerston North

cisreq@natlib.govt.nz

Free Phone: 0800 17 17 17

Free Fax: 0800 907 600

Christchurch Centre: (All the South Island)

300 Manchester St

PO Box 1380

Christchurch

chch@natlib.govt.nz

Free Phone: 0800 928 000

Free Fax: 0800 661 108

Invercargill Centre: (Only serves clients who are able to walk in and select their own books)

100 Nelson St

PO Box 1234

Invercargill

Telephone: (03) 216-0590

Facsimile: (03) 216-0599

Contact Sonja, ph. (03) 755-5300

mcgarveys@xtra.co.nz

Church of Christ, cnr. Stafford &

Sale Sts., 7:30pm start

Home educating through secondary and preparing for tertiary education Bring your youth with you for Q & A Session

Thu June 21 stay with Barbara's brother & family in Wanaka

Sat June 23 Invercargill

Contact Liz, ph. (03) 248-5084

Invercargill Christian Centre,

165 Leet Street

9:30am-5:00pm and 6:30-8:00pm

Cost \$10.00 per family or \$3.00

per session. Tea and coffee provided, bring you own lunch.

Topics to be covered during the day:

-How to deal with burnout

-Dealing with the pressures of home (schooling) educating

-Making the most of preschoolers

-Preparing for ERO visits

-Parent/teenage panel

-Getting into tertiary education and the workforce

The evening meeting will be The Fathers Role and a Vision for the Future.

Mon June 25 Dunedin Christian Home Schoolers

Elim Church, Harrow Street

Contact Yolanda, (03) 477-3039

roland.storm@clear.net.nz

or Jan, ph. (03) 474-0454

\$5.00 per family

\$10.00 for the children's programme per family, plus a collection for travel expenses.

9:00-9:30 registration

9:30-11:00 Session one -

"Education for Life"

- getting started each day (help for the procrastinator).

- remembering your God, have you made time for Him.

- balancing demands of house management and teaching.

- keeping a right balance of serving husbands and loving children.

- time for mum, personal time.

11:00-11.30 morning tea

11:30-12:30 "Learning Styles" -

taken by Yolanda Storm

12:30-1:30 lunch

1:30-3:00 Session two - "Home Educating our Youth"

- keeping our youth happy at home

- contact with others the same age

- special challenges for our youth

- what about qualifications?

- looking beyond the home education years

- some success stories

7:30-9:00 "Vision for the future, encouragement for the Dads"

Tue-Wed June 26-27 Oamaru

staying with Barbara's family.

Home Education meeting one of

these days: Contact Wendy, (03) 434-9107, flyfish@clear.net.nz.

Thu June 28 Ashburton

Pot providence tea and meeting.

Contact Helen, ph. (03) 303-6259

phtar@ihug.co.nz

Fri-Sat Jun 29-30 Christchurch

Contact Jill, ph. (03) 352-7554

hanna@xtra.co.nz

to register your interest in a possible meeting for this time.

Mon July 02 Timaru

7:30pm at St Phillips and All

Saints Anglican Church Hall,

Luxmore Road.

Contact Hilary, ph. (03) 688-3604

ross@waughconsult.co.nz

Tue July 03 McKenzie Country

with Barbara's sister.

Thu Jul 5 Waipara, Nth Cant'y

7:30pm evening meeting.

Contact Jenny, ph. (03) 314-6740

Fri July 06 Blenheim

Robyn Thwaites, ph. 578-5036

thwaiting@xtra.co.nz

7:00pm registration, 7:30pm start

Community House, Budge Street.

Topic: Home educating through

secondary and preparing for

tertiary education and the

workforce followed by The

Fathers Role and the Vision for

the Future.

Sat July 08 Picton to Wellington