

### The Hidden Curriculum

In a work by Alan Smith and Alison Montgomery titled *Values in Education in Northern Ireland*, released last year, the authors examine many of the factors that make up the “hidden curriculum” in schools.

While the hidden curriculum is generally perceived to be a rather nebulous concept, one researcher simply describing it as “all the other things that are learnt during schooling in addition to the official curriculum”, others suggest it covers a range of things. Some parts of a school’s curriculum may be covert and possibly described at “the manipulative curriculum” used to manipulate the unwary. There may be the “informal curriculum”, encompassing so much of what goes on in schools including the manner in which the formal curriculum is conducted. There is also the “unintended” or “forgotten” curriculum which consists of activities and policies which are done unthinkingly as they’ve always been done. And of course there is the “unrecognised” curriculum, that is, activities whose effects have never been recognised”. The teachers who were interviewed for this research project were not given these definitions, but they themselves often referred to various aspects of school life which involved “hidden agendas”, “covert actions” and “unspoken arrangements and policies”

All schooling institutions in New Zealand have at least a written charter and religious schools often have a more extensive statement describing their “special character”. These charters or

statements could be seen to embody the “ethos” of the school. The situation in Northern Ireland apparently is not as straightforward, as the study found that teachers, even in religious schools, had some difficulty in defining their school’s overall ethos. “However,” wrote the authors, “it became easier to discern the values underlying school ethos when teachers described the structural arrangements and relationships within their own schools.....ethos became more tangible and ‘concrete’ when they began to consider various aspects of school

life.”

There are implications here for parents considering sending their children to a school: what the school *says* are its values and what values it actually holds to can be two very different things. The same dichotomy goes for a family home educating its children. Assuming the comments here from this study on ethos are valid, then one can discern the *true* values or ethos actually practised by a school or a home education situation by observing what is actually done on a day to day basis. Home educators can profitably ask themselves, first, “What are the values or ethos by which I want to home educate my children?” and second, “Do our daily routines fall in line with this

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### NZ Children Take High Risks on Internet

While home educators as a whole seem fairly sophisticated and experienced when it comes to using computer technology to enhance their children’s learning, they and every other parent need to be aware of the dangers of unsupervised internet access.

Being exposed to pornography is one thing. But internet chatrooms and phone gossip lines are increasingly putting young people at risk of abuse — and police and other authorities can do little about it.

Teenagers are the biggest users of Internet chatrooms. Wellington police child abuse squad boss Dean Rosson knows of three cases in the past year where teenage girls — some as young as 13 — have started physical relationships with older men from

chatrooms. He is not a fan of chatrooms as some men go online with sinister intentions.

Sergeant Mark Cousins, Wellington youth aid section head, says police and parents hear about only a fraction of the sinister events that unfold through chatrooms. Many girls are actively hunting for men online and through phone services.

The trusting nature of teenagers makes them easy prey according to Internet Safety Group (ISG) President Liz Butterfield. She says New Zealand has a higher ratio for face-to-face meetings resulting from internet contact compared with American research. A survey taken last year on the nzgirl website showed that almost a quarter of 11- to 19-year-old girls

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ethos or do they stray from it?"

The hidden curriculum was found to manifest itself in several areas: curriculum emphases, pressure to perform, streaming students, the school's ethos, running the school as a business and various relationships, specifically teacher/pupil, head teacher/staff, and parent/teacher.

Consider the emphases placed within the curriculum: subjects given more time tended to be considered as more important subjects. "Several teachers commented that the compartmentalised structure of the curriculum [each subject presented in isolation from the other subjects] gave pupils the impression of a disjointed and segmented learning process." This tended to impede the pupils' ability to see how any one subject fitted within the overall "big picture".

Teachers also spoke, frequently with considerable concern, of the pressure on pupils to perform well. Schools also practise "streaming"

pupils according to their abilities, and this practice affects teachers' attitudes to lower stream pupils. The study found that it was not unusual for lower ability pupils to be seated at the back of the classroom, for teachers to "skip over more difficult bits", and "not to chase up" their homework. One teacher said these "cabbage classes" "slip to the bottom of the heap and pupils find they are all but ignored." In addition, such pupils have covertly restricted access to some aspects of the curriculum.

A school's ethos often contained a well-defined, but covert set of values where pupils were expected "to be well-behaved all of the time, to speak only when spoken to in class, fit every attainment target, and to originate from a good middle-class background with parents who only come to school on open nights." And some valiant teachers working with learning and behavioural challenges would be "encouraged" with comments such as, "as long as they're not harming the furniture or themselves, you're doing a good job."

teachers who don't like children. I can't help but wonder what effects this has on their teaching, not to mention the children's learning." Even so, the majority of teachers readily accepted some responsibility for the social development of their pupils. Indeed many identified this as an inherent requirement of their teaching role.

The style of leadership adopted by the head teacher was perceived as having an influential effect on staff morale, staff cohesion, staff communication and individual staff teaching.

Teachers in this survey felt a tension between their desire to protect their own expertise and the parents' desire to have a say. The parent/teacher relationship "was commonly characterised as one which is chequered with misunderstanding, misconceptions and differences of opinion." Many teachers felt they were expected to "fill in all the social, emotional and moral gaps", what they called an "impossible role".

(Extracted and condensed from: *Values in Education in Northern Ireland*, by Alan Smith and Alison Montgomery, Chapter Six, "Values and the Hidden Curriculum", <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/education/docs/valuesc6.htm>)

## 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.

TEACH Bulletin is available for a subscription of \$16 per year for 11 issues (none in December) or two years for \$30.

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

When schools are run "as a business", teachers would refer to the "depersonalising" effect of concepts concerned with marketability, accountability, the management of budgets, and input and output judged by exam results and the percentage of university entrants.

The nature of the exchange between teachers and pupils was perceived to be one of the main interactions through which values are defined and communicated. One teacher commented, "It's frightening you know, but there are a significant number of

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felt unsafe or threatened while using the Internet and 60% had used it unsafely — by giving out addresses, phone numbers or sending photos of themselves. More than 33% had met a stranger from the Internet in person, 1/3 meeting the stranger alone.

Keeping a computer in a child's bedroom is a recipe for disaster, Ms Butterfield says. Monitoring its use is essential, and a computer should be kept where parents can keep an eye on the screen.

A more recent study, *The Net Generation: Internet Safety Issues for Young New Zealanders*, by the

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# Trading Post



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Jenny Jenkins  
ph (07) 578-1904

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Winton, Southland  
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## For Sale:

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Saxon Math 54 2nd Edition Text book, Home study Packet, and Test Forms.....\$50  
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Michelle  
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# Letter

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Dear Families,

We'd like our home school children to learn about other countries by making friends there. It would also help their writing and typing skills. Would you please advertise this opportunity and send me names and ages and I'll match them up with children here.

Our support group is in the heartland of North America in the twin cities of Omaha, Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa. We have approximately 200 families that are members. We have a very active group that are always looking for interesting ways to educate their children.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Rachelle Whaley  
21264 Hidden Valley Lane  
Crescent, Iowa 51526  
USA  
rachellewhaley@hotmail.com

The President of  
The GARDENER  
Home School Support Group

## Charter Schools and Vouchers: What's the Problem?

Many think these options offer something too good to pass up: having our children educated outside of the public school system, yet the government still pays the bill! It seems to be the best of both worlds. And, hey: we are only getting our tax money back.

Is it really that simple? Let's look at charter schools and vouchers a little closer.

Charter schools are public schools of choice, funded by the state, that operate off-campus: in another physical location, in cyberspace or as a home school. The school is established by a "charter" agreement with the state that lists the school's mission, vision statement, etc. They often have a special focus in one area, for example, in practical engineering or art history.

Charter schools now exist in 37 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The Center for Education Reform estimates on its website that there are over 2,000 charter schools operating with more than 500,000 enrolled in these schools.

Supporters claim that the charter schools provide an innovative alternative of schooling that allows creative approaches to teaching, freed from the strict rules and regulation of the public school system. They point out that some charter schools provide a protective environment -- the home -- where students can pursue creative styles of learning.

Charter schools operate on taxpayer dollars and offer the accredited high school diploma, free computer, Internet access and software plus support by certified teachers. Therefore they follow the state curriculum closely which, being geared to testing, tends to "teach to the test". Parents must realize this limits their ability to make decisions. It is taken for granted in the USA

that governments will demand accountability for their funding, to be assured that no fraud is involved and that the monies are not used for an improper purpose. And most charter schools will not allow funding to be used to purchase material that is religious in content. Similar restrictions can be a part of voucher programmes too.

Obviously, charter schools are home schools in name only. It is public schooling conducted at home. One Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) member shared her experience:

"At first it was exciting, though enrolling was very institutional. Then it came time to meeting with a teacher. I stated that I was not interested in meeting weekly but that I would bring their work in monthly as per the requirements. That worked out great the first month. The next month however the teacher wanted to plan out what we'd be doing for the following month. No, I wanted the freedom to decide that for our own family. So we agreed to do the work we wanted and write up the plans retrospectively. This allowed us to continue with the co-op classes and fieldtrips the kids so enjoyed.

"The next time we met, I took the kid's work but left the children behind. It soon became apparent that the teachers were required to talk to the children at these visits and assess them not only on their academics, but also on their physical appearance...looking for signs of abuse and/or neglect at their discretion. I had forgotten just how involved the government is in the lives of families enrolled in public schools. Even the charter school still believes we need interference from trained government agents, that we are incapable of educating our own children.

"I found that we were limited in what we would learn and forced to learn in the "one size fits all" methods of the schools. We found ourselves so consumed in getting the work done that my children were not retaining any of the

subjects. It was simply a race to get it done and turned in, stereotypical of schools. To me academic work should be savored to allow them to retain it and enjoy it.

"We found that the kids were still categorized by age: "You're in fifth grade, so you need to be studying American history; ancient history's next year." I found this very limiting. Their first priority was the \$4,000 per child they received from the state. Second was programming the children for taking standardized tests to get good results, typical of schools."

This member went on to share that when she finally tried to remove her children from the charter school program, she was contacted repeatedly by Child Welfare Services demanding that she place her children in school.

In June, 1997, Alaska enacted the best home school law in the nation. It has no teaching qualifications for parents, no regulation at any level of government, no notice to anyone of the parents' decision to conduct the home education, no registration with the state, no reporting to anyone of any information about the home education program, no testing of the children, no required subjects, and no evaluation of the program by anyone.

That same month the Galena School District began a statewide program of correspondence study known as Interior Distance Education of Alaska (I.D.E.A.). In addition to all the benefits, restrictions and accountability items mentioned above, parents must report to Galena School District the progress of all students each semester. High school students are required to submit to a yearly interview with an I.D.E.A. representative.

This is a money making scheme for Galena School District, but must eventually result in higher taxes.

According to Eddy Jeans, Finance

Director at the Alaska Department of Education, Galena School District received in state funds for fiscal year 2000: \$14,093,136, or \$4,104 per pupil, for the 3,434 students in the I.D.E.A. program. Each of these students received an allotment averaging only \$1,600 per year, meaning Galena School District enjoyed a gross profit of over \$2,500 per pupil on I.D.E.A. for a total of \$8,585,000 for fiscal year 2000. Was all of that lavished on the mere 226 other students in the District not doing the I.D.E.A. program? Since many of these I.D.E.A. students were previously purely home educated, not draining any money from the state's coffers, the state will have to get that extra money from taxpayers. If vouchers were introduced and distributed to all school-aged children, including the home schoolers not in the I.D.E.A. program, it would create an even bigger financial burden.

Being able to interact parent to child without contradiction from competing authority structures; enjoying a curriculum that starts at waking up and finishes at going to sleep seven days a week, 365 days a year; learning in the context of the real world of the home, the workplace, the marketplace and the community; being free from artificial contrivances of lectures and assignments geared to learning for an exam so one can forget that lot of knowledge and start cramming for the next exam; not being constrained by a narrow, politically mandated curriculum but being free to follow many more paths of inquiry to a far greater depth.....these are among the real opportunities open to home educators. The state and/or other institutions can offer financial carrots which may tempt home educators to exchange their precious freedoms for money plus harmless looking constraints. This has happened to virtually all of New Zealand's private schools through the Integration Act, giving the state a near-total monopoly on schooling. May home educators be ever vigilant to guard against the adoption of such schemes here.

(Parts extracted with permission from "Virtual Charter Schools" by Chris Klicka, HSLDA.)

## A Win/Win/Rip-Off Deal

The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) in the USA tells of a sneaky tactic employed by the Colorado State School District of Sargent.

Local home school families have received a letter inviting them to enroll their children in public school for a three-day trial period during the last week of September and the first week of October. This coincides with the state's "count" period during which they determine how many students are enrolled. This final tally is forwarded to the state and federal governments who then fund the schools on a per-student basis.

The letter said, "In exchange for your child's attendance on those three days, we will issue a check to you in the amount of \$600 per child for you to use for curriculum and other materials needed to support your child's education."

Since each student present during that late September/early October head count is worth close to \$2,900 in state and federal funds, the deal represents a \$2,300 profit for the school district for each home schooler who shows up for those three days. The school district wins, the home schooling family appears to win, but the long-suffering tax-payer is just plain ripped-off.

## Falling Literacy

Ruth Williams, senior lecturer at the Auckland College of Education, and Lester Flockton, Co-Director of the Educational Assessment Research Unit (EARU) at the University of Otago have both recently commented extensively on why the literacy levels of New Zealand schools appear to be falling, as was highlighted in a report (Me Panui Tatou Katoa — Let's All Read) by Parliament's Science and Education Select Committee back in August. The many factors

outside of the school teacher's control were mostly blamed for the malaise.

A review of these things is beneficial to home educators, helping us to identify and avoid the same problems, and also to be reminded of the drawbacks of conventional schools as outlined by those within the state school system.

Mr Flockton said the school and the teacher should never be held totally responsible for learning outcomes, but that "society" also needs to carry the can. Ms Williams was more pointed: she identified parents and the child's growing up environment: "underfathered children, dual-income families, children whose main leisure activities are watching television or playing video games, and children whose behaviour is less easy to manage in classrooms than in previous times."

But Mr Flockton identifies plenty of problems with the classroom environment: schools with up to 20 nationalities; children with little or no English language; others with seriously retarded oral language development; children who turn up at school with insufficient sleep, diet, love, affection and socialised behaviour; towards 3000 children entering our schools who were born to teenage solo mothers. Quoting Anne Lewis in the April 1999 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*, he said that because children differ — by socio-economic background, by developmental rate, by motivation to achieve — the teaching will be largely ineffective until students are ready (developmentally), willing (motivated) and able (cognitively and experientially) to learn! "Surely every child does not need to learn the same things at the same time or to the same degree." (Amen! — Ed.)

Ms Williams also pointed a finger at Government policy, an overcrowded curriculum, and teachers being expected to teach values. Said Ms Williams, "We say we value education. This

(Continued on page 6: *Literacy*)

## Between Times

A small homeschooling magazine will be published for a limited time — the introductory issue in December 2001, and four at the end of each term of 2002. *Between Times* is aimed at parents of home educated teenagers and those approaching that time. The magazine is intended to be inclusive — it will have both Christian and non-Christian input, and hopefully input about all homeschooling styles. The magazine is based around ongoing columns in which five long established home educating parents of teens have agreed to share some of their family life and homeschooling experiences. The idea is not to try and tell you the way you should homeschool, but simply to share how it is for us. The five columnists are:

**Carol Brown** (Kauroa, Waikato),  
**Jenny Herd** (Pukerua Bay, Kapiti Coast),

**Susan McMinn Seefeldt** (Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA),

**Raewyn Shand** (Port Ligar, Marlborough),

**Craig & Barbara Smith** (Palmerston North).

There will also be other articles, book reviews & letters — especially if readers contribute! Subscription Rates within NZ: \$3.75 per issue, \$15.00 for all four in 2002, \$17.00 for the five planned (December 2001 plus 4 in 2002).

Please make cheques out to C. Brown and post along with your name and full address to:

46 Pond Rd.  
R.D. 1, Raglan 2051.

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(Continued from page 5: *Literacy*) should mean we value teachers. In fact, we value neither.”

Well, home educators obviously value education; and they increasingly value their role as tutors and mentors and significant shapers of our future society.

# Coming Events

## Christian Home Schoolers of NZ Worldview Conference Sunday to Friday 7-12 April 2002

Willow Park Convention Centre  
Eastern Beach  
Auckland

### Speakers:

**Dr David Noebel**, author of *Understanding the Times* a detailed analysis/comparison of Marxism/Leninism, secular humanism and Biblical Christianity;

**Chuck Edwards** of Summit Ministries, Colorado Springs, USA.

Live-in, fully catered=\$180 adult or \$160 teen student.  
\$30 per full day; \$10 per evening & other options.  
19 lectures, plus discussions & sports.

### For Brochure Contact:

Carol, ph. (09) 410-3933

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## South Auckland HEs Workshop Saturday 2 March

Papakura Baptist Church  
44 Clevedon Rd.  
Papakura

### For info & brochure:

**Christine**, ph. (09) 292-8454  
the\_whettons@xtra.co.nz

**Kaye**, ph. (09) 266-9218

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(Continued from page 2: *Risks*)

ISG and the University of Auckland, questioned more than 2500 young people aged 7 to 19 at three Auckland schools (92% being Internet users) and found that 23% of children aged between 7 and 10 (37% for those aged 16+) have had a face-to-face meeting with someone they contacted on the Net, and not even half told their parents.

(From Wellington *Dominion*, 30 January 2002, p. 13, & 4 February 2002.)

## Wellington Area Workshop

Venue: Porirua

Dates: 22 & 23 February

### Friday evening 22 February

7:30 pm

“A Vision For The Future”

This will have a Christian flavour to it -- Craig Smith

### Saturday 23 February

9:30 - 10:30

“Avoiding Burnout” -- Craig and Barbara Smith

10.30 - 11:00 Morning tea

11:00 - 12:30

Two electives:

“Getting Started”

-- Craig Smith

“Classical Home Education”

-- Barbara Smith

12:30 - 14:00

Lunch time — quite long so people can talk to others who will be organised to talk informally on what they use to teach maths and reading. They will have resource samples with them. This time also gives people opportunity to change over parents to attend the afternoon session.

14:00 - 15:30

Three electives:

“Home Educating Through Secondary and Preparing For Tertiary Education and The Workforce”

— C. & B. Smith

“Use of Internet & Computers”

-- Phil Astley and

Julie Ward

“Five in a Row”

-- Leanne Morris

15:30 - 16:30

Panel of ex home educators now out in the world/workforce/tertiary study etc

16:30

afternoon tea, tidy up and home

For more information and registration:

**Jocelyn Young**

ph. (04) 237-7590

fax. (04) 237-7044

pyoung@clear.net.nz

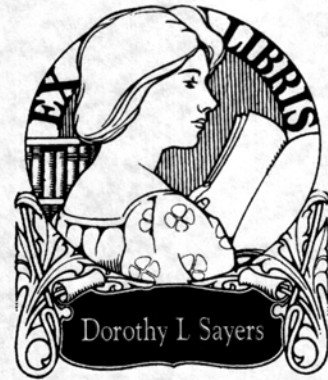
*Hot off the Press!!*

A New Zealand Home Educator's  
Guidebook

# Preparing for an ERO Review

by Craig S. Smith

# The Lost Tools of Learning



**Preparing for an ERO Review**  
20 pages of insightful and helpful comment on preparing for the arrival of the Review Officer. Chapters include: Overall Strategies, What they're looking for, What if you've changed curriculum, Access to children, At home or a neutral venue, Coping with a negative report, etc.

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