

# TEACH Bulletin

## Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 80

April 2004

### Computer Million\$ Reap Little

We are being scalped again. The Minister of Education Trevor Mallard recently sent out an email announcement<sup>1</sup> telling us he is forking out \$27.45 million of our money over the next three years to Microsoft, Apple and eTrust for their latest software. Why on earth do that? So that state schools and integrated schools – but not private schools – can access all this software for free. Trevor went on to say that schools “will have the opportunity to build the capability of students, teachers and institutions to exploit the educational potential of ICT. This supports the government’s commitment to provide all New Zealanders with skills to meet the technology demands of the 21st century.”

This is rubbish. We know it is chock full of the worst kind of political pork barrelling and propaganda for at least three reasons.

First, what are the “technology demands of the 21st century”, and who has a handle on them? Since things are changing so rapidly in this area, only elite specialists can ever hope to keep up. In addition, all the schools can hope to give students is a tiny taste of what cyberspace is like. Let’s crunch the numbers: with one computer in each classroom, and a hypothetical number of 20 children in each class (definitely on the low side) trying to get at that one computer, and even with a full hour of class time, each student can only expect 3 (three) minutes of personal computer time a day per class. That’s pretty useless. So if each student was allowed a generous 15 minutes alone on the computer, he could have that once every school week per class; or half an hour once a fortnight per class.

Assuming the student has six different classes at school, that would add up to three hours of private computer time in six half-hour blocks spread over the ten school days of a two-week period. How much can one learn at that pace? It’s pretty bitsy. How about 5 children on one computer at a time? Ever tried it? If you have you’ll know it’s totally useless for at least 3 of the 5, the other 2 completely dominating its use.

Having computer labs could allow students to each have a good solid hour once a week, say. Here’s what it would take, however: according to the MoE’s statistics web pages showing the numbers of schools and students ([\[tinyurl.com/2rcgw\]\(http://tinyurl.com/2rcgw\) and <http://tinyurl.com/2boos>\), there are 725,023 students attending the 2581 state and state integrated \(not private or correspondence\) schools in this country. That is an average of 281 students per school. So for each student to get a minimal one single hour a week personal computer time, the average school would need a computer lab with 11.24 machines in it. We’re talking 29,011 computers here to supply all schools adequately, not counting the one in each classroom the MoE is already supplying. If each of these lab computers only cost \\$500, that is a \\$14,505,500 outlay just for the hardware, not counting the software and the licences or the peripherals, replacements and updates. And is the MoE planning to install computer labs in the schools and add computer studies to the already overloaded curriculum? Haven’t heard of any such plans. So until they do, these com-](http://</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

*(Continued on page 2: Million\$)*

### Error to Correct

Last month’s article in this space, “We Topped 1 % !” was full of errors. I had taken the school and attendance figures from a *NZ Herald* article (“School by Numbers”, 27/1/04, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=3545799&thesection=news&t>), and subsequently found that the figures both there and even in the MoE’s website appear to suffer from basic errors in addition.

MoE figures as at 1 July 2003 show there are 737,608 school-aged children (not counting the adults and foreign students) attending all registered schools including the NZ Correspondence School (NZCS). Add to this figure the 6437 home educated students and you get a grand total of 744,045. Therefore we home edu-

cators number only 0.865 % of all NZ school-aged children.

There are a grand total of 2581 state and state integrated schools (not counting the NZCS or private schools) and a total of 725,023 students attending (this does include both adult and foreign students). So the average-sized NZ state and state integrated school has 281 students. (Out of interest, the average-sized state school has 286 students; state integrated schools average 246 students; and private schools average 260 students.)

Home educated students, therefore, represent 23 average-sized state or state integrated schools. Home educators certainly have the best teacher/pupil ratio of all.

(Continued from page 1: *Million\$*)  
computers seem to be little more than fancy, expensive classroom décor.

Second, how many students will need to know this stuff anyway? A more revealing question is, "How many students know this stuff *al-ready*?" An article posted on the SiliconValley.com website on 5 June 2002, reported that 90 of the 100 largest school districts in the USA were surveyed in regard to school computer use. "Of the school districts surveyed, 54 percent reported that students were providing technical support for their districts. In 43 percent of districts, students troubleshoot for hardware, software and other problems, it said. Thirty-nine percent of districts said students set up equipment and wiring, and nearly as many districts report that students perform technical maintenance."<sup>2</sup> The deal Trevor cut actually provides the teachers themselves – rather than the students – with something that *is* of value: the entire suite of software plus the licence to use them all at home in addition to the previous deal of supplying teachers with their own personal laptops.

Third, computers and "educational"

software are ineffective as educational tools. The Ministry's own research reveals this and they've even posted the results on their own website,<sup>3</sup> where it says in the executive summary: "Overall, the effectiveness of computer-assisted learning has not been conclusively demonstrated. To date, it has been shown to be less effective, on average, than other forms of intervention in education... Computer-assisted learning programs, especially integrated learning systems, are generally costly. Their efficacy and cost effectiveness relative to alternative programs, particularly with respect to reading, is questionable."

That is to say, tens of millions of our tax dollars, extracted from us by the state, are being spent by the MoE on fancy computer technology which is poorly understood by most teachers, ineffective as a teaching tool, rarely used by students in a meaningful way or for a meaningful period of time, and thoroughly under-utilised by all. The winners appear to be Microsoft and individual teachers themselves.

### Constructivist Pedagogy

This MoE-sponsored survey actually came up with something else quite interesting. It further said in the executive summary: "Generally, computer-assisted learning software is under-pinned by an older, neo-behaviourist theory of learning, one that has been displaced in the classroom by more social constructivist views of learning. Particularly in New Zealand primary classrooms, the approach of the software may differ considerably from widely accepted classroom pedagogy."

So what are these "social constructivist views" which appear to be the accepted pedagogy in New Zealand primary classrooms?

Let the experts speak for themselves:

"Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding.

**"Reality:** Social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity. Members of a society together invent the properties of the world. For the social constructivist, reality cannot be discovered: it does not exist prior to its social invention.

**"Knowledge:** To social constructivists, knowledge is also a human product, and is socially and culturally constructed. Individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment they live in."<sup>4</sup>

"Students actively construct their own knowledge and understandings. They do this by making connections, building mental schemata and developing new concepts from previous understandings. Instead of learning a set knowledge base, students develop evolving knowledge bases through interactions with others...The social constructivist model assumes all knowledge is social in nature. Learning occurs in a context of social interactions leading to understanding. Learners... are given opportunities to restructure information in ways that make sense to them."<sup>5</sup>

To the constructivist, knowledge and reality do not exist by themselves. That is why they said in the quotes above that knowledge and reality cannot be discovered. Instead, people invent it for themselves as they interact together socially. This implies that we do not live in a universe, but instead in a multiverse, wherein each social grouping constructs its own body of knowledge and concepts of reality. There is no one "reality" out there which alone is the truth. Instead, each social grouping, or culture, invents its own.

Fortunately there are enough older teachers in the school system who recognise this for the hopeless con-

(Continued on page 3: *Million\$*)

## 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 mother's teaching.  
— Proverbs 1:8

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fusion that it is and continue to pass on to their students, as much as they are able given the many other constraints of the curriculum guidelines,<sup>6</sup> real honest-to-goodness knowledge and a concept of the true reality in which we live, things which generations have passed down with confidence up until now. Sadly, the youngsters leaving NZ's colleges of education are all schooled in this constructivist thought, meaning we're all heading for a world of trouble as the school system turns out people who are disconnected from the historical continuity of reality and reckon they can create, in harmony with others, a brave new world that will operate according to their own designs.

In case you don't recognise this, it is the utopian ideal sought by every radical, blood-soaked revolutionary group throughout history, from Jim Jones' Guyana sect to Stalin's USSR, to the French Revolution of 1789, to the Roman, Greek, Persian and Babylonian empires and all the way back to the first rebels to desire to construct reality according to their own dictates, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This is indeed the same plot from which social constructivism comes. The key founder of the idea, the one to whom most other constructivist writers make constant reference, is psychologist (with no formal training) Lev Vygotsky, a keen participant in the 1917 Russian Communist Revolution.<sup>7</sup> He is described as a writer "influenced by Marxism and dialectical materialism," and his writings are considered foundational for Marxist psychology.<sup>8</sup> And without fear of contradiction, it can be stated that Marxism has been the worst political/social/economic plague ever to strike the earth, where people are happy to exterminate their fellow countrymen, as opposed to foreign invaders, in untold millions, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw in the USSR, China, Cambodia, etc.

Just one more reason we can be so thankful that we educate our own children in the real world environment of the home.

### Notes:

1. One can sign up for such announce-

ments from many MPs at: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/lists/default.cfm>

2. <http://www.siliconvalley.com/mld/siliconvalley/news/3402608.htm>
3. <http://tinyurl.com/2bswg> or <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=5499&indexid=6920&indexparentid=1024>
4. "Social Constructivism" by Beaumie Kim, <http://itstudio.coe.uga.edu/ebook/SocialConstructivism.htm>
5. "Scaffolding: A Powerful Tool in Social Constructivist Classrooms" by Laura R. Roehler, Michigan State University and Danise J. Cantlon, Holt Public Schools, <http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/literacy/papers/paperlr2.htm>
6. A real eye-opening read would be *Vying for Our Children* by Paul Henderson published by Maxim Institute ([www.maxim.org.nz](http://www.maxim.org.nz)) of NZ.
7. <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/people/v/y.htm#vygotsky-lev>
8. <http://www.marxists.org/subject/psychology/index.htm>

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## What Government Does to Families, Part 3 (Final)

In Sweden, the elderly are "free" of potential dependence on their grown children; infants, small children, and teenagers are "free" of reliance on their parents for protection and basic support; grown adults are "free" of meaningful obligations either to their biological parents, or to their children; and men and women are "free" of any of the mutual promises once embodied in marriage. This "freedom" has come in exchange for a universal, common dependence on the state, and the nearly complete bureaucratization of what had once been family living.

(While Sweden's citizens have recently been giving growing support to political parties which reject this total socialisation of the family, we in NZ hear the same arguments used by the Myrdals back in the 1930s. Children are seen mostly as freeloaders, big drains on the family's economy rather than contributors to it. We are told it costs over \$200,000 to raise a child and all we expect in return are some smiles and emotional satisfaction. It is no wonder

that NZ couples are having fewer children. – Ed.)

"Preventive social policy" has become the new rallying cry. The arguments ring familiar: help by state officials early in life is more economical and more effective than help later on; the longer we wait before discovering symptoms of stress, the more costly it will be. It all sounds reasonable, in a way, but the end product would be a nightmare of bureaucratic rule, and the virtual destruction of the family.

In the September report of the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, we catch the flavor of this looming, new American order. This panel, appointed exclusively by the Reagan and Bush administrations, called child abuse a "national emergency," adding: "No other problem may equal its power to cause or exacerbate a range of social ills." The key finding of the report is that the Federal and state governments have spent too much time *investigating* suspected cases of abuse; instead, the Federal government should focus on *preventing* abuse and neglect before it happens. (Emphases added. – Ed.) The Board recommends that the Federal government immediately develop a national program of "home visits" to all new parents and their babies by government health workers and social investigators, who would identify potential abusers and help them.

The alternative to this "Swedish solution" is called a "free society," where instead of completing the client/welfare state, we instead dismantle what we already have. The agenda here is simple, radical and pragmatically anti-bureaucratic:

- end state-mandated and state-controlled education, leaving the training and rearing of children up to their own parents or legal guardians;
- abolish child-labor laws, again reasoning that parents or guardians are the best judges of their children's interests and welfare, vastly better than any combination of state bureaucrats;
- and dismantle the Social Security system, leaving protection



or security in old age to be provided, once again, by individuals and their families.

These acts would restore the economic benefits of children to parents. Most commentators would respond that these would be impossible, inconceivable actions in a modern, industrial society.

My response would be to point to one of the few remaining “zones of liberty” such as the Amish, who beat off government challenges to their special limited educational practices (namely, schooling only by Amish teachers and only through the eighth grade), who make heavy use of child labor, and who avoid Social Security (as well as government farm welfare) out of principle. Not only have the Amish managed to survive in an industrial, market milieu; they have thrived. Their families are three times the size of the American average. When facing fair competition, their farms turn profits in “good times and bad.”

Their savings rate is extraordinarily high. Their farming practices, from any environmental standard, are exemplary, marked by a committed stewardship of the soil and avoidance of chemicals and artificial fertilizers. During a time when the number of American farmers has fallen sharply, Amish farm colonies have spread widely, from a base in southeastern Pennsylvania to Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

It is probably true that relatively few contemporary Americans would choose to live like the Amish, given a true freedom of choice. Then again, no one can be quite sure what America would look like, if citizens were actually freed from the bureaucratic rule over families that began to be imposed here, over one hundred years ago, starting with the rise of the mandated public school.

I have absolutely no doubt, though, that under a true regime of liberty, families would be stronger, children more plentiful, and men and women happier and more content. For me, that’s enough.

(From “What Has Government Done to Our Families?”, 1991, by

Allan Carlson, author of *The Swedish Experiment in Family Politics*; president of the Howard Center in Rockford, Illinois. Email: allan@profam.org.)

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## **Technology Dumbing Down the Classroom, Part 2 (Final)**

Technical hassles are just the beginning of the schools’ troubles [when they take computers on board in large numbers]. Take the much vaunted effort to close the “digital divide.” Popularized by the Clinton administration, this initiative was aimed at the poor, who were supposedly being shut out of social and economic opportunities because they had fewer computers than wealthy families do. This campaign has been so appealing that, according to a recent U.S. Department of Education report, computers are now more prevalent in poor schools than in wealthy ones. Yet political and education leaders haven’t stopped crying about this terrible “divide.” Meanwhile, the schools’ new technology riches took the real divide between rich and poor children — the educational divide — and widened it.

In Harlem, for example, teachers have their hands full just trying to maintain order and pass on a basic level of knowledge. Now, they have to spend much of their time managing technical hassles the schools can’t afford to fix and watching for cheating, instant messaging tricks and illicit material on screens that teachers cannot control or even see.

At Congress’ behest, schools have been rapidly installing “filtering” software to block offensive Internet sites. Unfortunately, filtering technology is inherently flawed and extremely costly, and students regularly hack through it anyway. When the computers do work, fancy software programs automate design and math functions so beautifully that students don’t have to think through much of their work anymore. School papers are so dominated by computer graphics these days that students often spend only a fraction

of their time on the intellectual content of the report. Strangely, instead of bemoaning developments like these, nearly everyone — teachers and parents, principals and politicians — applauds them.

In both poor and wealthy schools, educators have invested millions in costly software packages, now pitched as the answer to President Bush’s call for education initiatives that are proven, through “scientific research,” to increase achievement. Unfortunately, the research behind many, if not most, of these claims is questionable.

One of the most common selling points for computers in schools, even in first and second grades, is to prepare youngsters for tomorrow’s increasingly high-tech jobs. Strangely, this may be the computer evangelists’ greatest hoax. When business leaders talk about what they need from new recruits, they hardly mention computer skills, which they find they can teach employees relatively easily on their own. Employers are most interested in what are sometimes called “soft” skills: a deep knowledge base and the ability to listen and communicate; to think critically and imaginatively; to read, write and figure, and other capabilities that schools are increasingly neglecting.

A report from the Information Technology Association of America, which represents a range of companies that use technology, put it this way: “Want to get a job using information technology to solve problems? Know something about the problems that need to be solved.”

Despite these sobering realities, schools are rushing into computing as if it were Nirvana. In Napa, New Technology High School puts a computer on every student’s desk and orients nearly every academic project around the computer screen. The school has been widely held up as a national scholastic model, by both state and federal education authorities.

Yet the academic work in New Tech classrooms is shockingly thin. In class after class, students are encouraged to conduct almost all their

research online, which means that books, magazines and other in-depth sources play a minimal role in their bibliographies.

An indication of the school's academic culture is revealed by one instructor's oft-repeated advice to his students: "It doesn't matter what you know. It matters what you show." Ironically, one of New Tech's biggest weak spots is in math skills, perhaps the primary prerequisite for advanced high-tech jobs.

In fairness to San Francisco, it should be noted that not every school has fallen for the techno-evangelists' utopian visions. Each school now has some local control over its own budget. Some have chosen to embrace technology; some have returned to the basics.

McKinley Elementary, a poor, struggling school in the Mission District, just made a 100-point jump on state test scores simply by practicing the 3 Rs. It was relentless work, using many different creative techniques. Perhaps more importantly, McKinley parents point primarily to the individual attention the school's students now get, including a prodigious amount of after-school tutoring.

Aptos Middle School is another example. Largely because of a parent campaign, the school chose to cut technology spending in favor of band and orchestra programs. The implications of that choice go far beyond the cause of fun and curricular variety. The scientific literature includes robust evidence on the value of real music lessons (as opposed to just listening to music — the famed but spurious "Mozart effect"). Learning to actually play a musical instrument seems to consistently foster sophisticated intellectual skills — a finding that is glaringly missing from studies of the computer's effect on achievement. One well-regarded music study produced physical evidence that mastering an instrument expands an important quadrant of the brain.

Unfortunately, schools that follow these truths, rather than the lure of novelty, are rare. Most school technology stories play out the way Union City's has. In 2001, five years

after its \$37-million spending spree on school computers, the district discovered that a lot of its fancy new gear was becoming obsolete. The district then had to spend another \$5 million to upgrade its system when budgets were tight. This is at a time when district enrollment was falling, a turn that in itself cost the district \$6 million in state funding. "It is killing us," said Pat Gibbons, Union City's deputy superintendent. "And we are not alone."

(From the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 Nov 2003, "Computer illogic: Despite great promise, technology is dumbing down the classroom", by Todd Oppenheimer, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2003/11/30/ING8L39SIP1.DTL>. Todd Oppenheimer is author of *The Flickering Mind: The False Promise of Technology in the Classroom and How Learning Can Be Saved*. His website is: [www.flickeringmind.net](http://www.flickeringmind.net).)

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## AIMING at Minimums

In early March this year, the Minister of Education, Trevor Mallard, made a speech to the Tauranga Chamber of Commerce. He basically repeated things he says all the time. Let me simply string together a few of his comments.<sup>1</sup>

"We need an education system that provides our children with the highest possible standard of teaching and learning.... I want us to have an education system where every child is expected to succeed. We need to ensure that every child fulfils their potential to the highest possible standard. As a minimum, every child should leave school with the ability to read, write and do maths.... We want to build an education system that equips New Zealanders with 21st century skills.... If we're going to raise the standard of our whole education system, we need to start early. That's one of the key reasons why I'm placing such a high priority on early childhood education.... Literacy and numeracy is also a major focus and we are putting \$43 million a year into literacy work alone. Ensuring that every child attains minimum standards in reading and writing is a funda-

mental priority.... For the first time [NCEA will let employers] know for sure that minimum standards in critical areas like reading and writing have been attained."

First, we have the Minister of Education himself butchering English grammar, once in a way commonly done today to avoid PC sensitivities: in the third sentence the plural pronoun "their" has a singular antecedent, "child", to avoid a "his/her" dilemma. In the third to last sentence he should have "Literacy and numeracy are also major foci..."

Second, the Minister starts off by saying we need "the highest possible standard of teaching and learning.... where every child is expected to succeed," fulfilling his "potential to the highest possible standard". This is great, having superlative objectives...they just don't get any higher! Then he drops his sights to ground level: he mentions minimums three times, each time in connection with the common basics, the old "Three Rs" of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

The first time he mentions minimums is as a starting point. Fair enough, really. That's what minimums are for. But this minimum says, "every child *should leave school* with the ability to read, write and do maths"!!! Friends, after compulsory state schooling for the last 127 years over which time countless millions of dollars have been spent on research and development, on teacher training, virtually every scrap of overseas research also being available to us, and with millions of children of all sorts passing through the system for 9 years at least (most for 10 or more), being observed daily for hours a day by these highly trained teachers over the last 12 or so generations of school children....wouldn't it be reasonable to assume that they would have figured out the three Rs by now? Isn't 10 years of schooling long enough....several times over long enough.... for even "slow" children to learn to read, write and do numbers??? Why does it take so long? (Sir Neil Waters, past Vice-Chancellor of Massey University and NZ Qualifications Authority Board Chairman himself asked the same rhetorical question in 1996.

(Continued on page 6: *Minimums*)

# Coming Events

## Fri-Sun 28-30 May 04

### H.E.A.R.T. - Home Educators' Annual Retreat

**Venue:** Totara Springs, Matamata  
**Cost:** \$122 - \$149.00 per person depending on accommodation  
**Contact:** Sue at abacus@maxnet.co.nz or Chris at (07) 883-2771  
**Details**

Full programme during weekend.  
**Keynote speaker:** Rosie Boom

## Wed 30 June 2004

### 3rd Annual Morrinsville Home Schoolers History Fair

**Venue:** Morrinsville Bible Chapel Hall, 139 Anderson Street, Morrinsville.  
**Cost:** \$5 for 1-2 entries, \$10 for 3 or more per family.  
**Contact:** Robyn - Ph. (07) 889-1189, robyn.mellar-smith@maxnet.co.nz  
**Programme**

9-10am Setup  
10am-12noon Exhibit  
12-2pm lunch/chatting/cleanup.  
Start preparing now!

Similar presentation to a Science Fair, i.e. 3 stand-up boards. Make implements, models to go with it. Dress up to match your time period! You can present a particular time period, or the history of a people group/person, or the history of a subject, e.g. the history of flight. Bring finger food for a shared lunch.

This year, individual exhibits will not be judged officially, however spot prizes for excellence may be awarded by our sponsors, Morrinsville Books and More, who will probably have a book stall there.

Each child/exhibit will receive a certificate.

There are 3 age groups:

1. Up to 7 years
2. 8 - 10 years
3. 11 years and up

Family entries are welcome.

Please pre-register by phoning Robyn Smith, (07)889-1189 or email: robyn\_smith@maxnet.co.nz to allow us to have some idea of numbers. All welcome!

## Mon-Sat, 11-17 Oct

### Home Education Awareness Week

## Tue-Fri 18-21 Jan 2005

### Christian Worldview Conference

**Venue:** Willowpark, Auckland  
**Contact:** Carol: Ph. (09) 410-3933, Email ces-books@intouch.co.nz

**Keynote speaker:** Dr R C Sproul, Jr., a totally committed home schooler, a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary, Grove City College and received his D.Min. from Whitefield Theological Seminary. R.C. is the editor of *Tabletalk magazine*, associate pastor of teaching of Saint Peter Presbyterian Church, and the director of the Highlands Study Center. He has written or edited nine books, and contributed to several others. The important thing is that he is the husband of Denise, and the father of home educated children Darby, Campbell, Shannon, Delaney, Erin Claire, and Maili. At the Highlands Study Center, R.C. teaches the Tuesday Night Bible study for the community, most of the Highlands Academy classes, the resident students, and serves as senior editor of *Every Thought Captive*.

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(Continued from page 5: *Minimums*)

His answer? It takes that long to socialise somebody!<sup>2</sup>)

The second time he mentions minimum standards in the Three Rs, it appears that is all he's aiming for, and that he's spending \$43 million a year in pursuit of this minimum. In fact, this is a follow-on statement from the stated aim that, "If we're going to raise the standard..." we need to get into early childhood education in a big way. So he is saying that *raising the standard* will require more time and then it will only bring us to the point that children in state schools will learn the Three Rs, implying rather strongly that they don't at present! This does not infuse me with any confidence at all, especially given the system's 127-year history of what appears to be constantly *sinking* standards.

The third time minimum standards in the Three Rs (what the Minister

calls "critical areas") are mentioned, it is to assure employers that prospective employees, after 10 years of compulsory state schooling, will have attained such minimum literacy skills: skills previous generations routinely taught to their own children as an obvious *prerequisite* to going to school at six or seven!!

Without the Three Rs a person is *illiterate*. That means he is inescapably uneducated as well. To go on about attaining minimum standards of literacy is to make a most empty and hollow boast: such a person has only just begun to become educated. Remember: Mr Mallard did, in fact, spell out what he means by "minimum" standards: "We need to ensure that every child fulfils their potential to the highest possible standard." In his speech transcript, the very next words are: "As a minimum, every child should leave school with the ability to read, write and do maths." This is hardly what one could call being educated.

In the meantime an opinion piece in the *Dominion Post* of 8 March, has writer Joanne Black admitting, "I don't have the time to take on anything that requires a serious commitment, but nor do I have the right attitude...I simply assume that, because my kids can read, and don't come home with bloodied noses, and that because I don't have to peel their fingers one by one off the door jamb to get them to go to school each morning, that everything's going okay....I thought of school as free childcare, and if the kids happened to learn anything while they were there, it was a bonus." While she doesn't think many parents share her views, Dr John Clark of Massey University's Department of Policy Studies in Education would say she's spot on.<sup>3</sup>

### Notes:

1. From Mallard's email@executive.govt.nz, 11 March 2004. Yes, stringing sentences together in this way, even though they are in the order he spoke them, is open to the charge of manipulating the context. Yet it is his choice of words I want to emphasise.
2. NZQA's magazine *LEARN*, Issue 10, November 1996, p. 8.
3. Course notes for *Understanding Education in Aotearoa/NZ*, 1997.



# Coming Events

## Fri/Sat 23/24 January 2004

### Shore Home Educators Network Seminar

**Venue:** Windsor Park Centre, 550 East Coast Rd, Mairangi Bay, North Shore City

**Cost:** One Day: \$25 individual; \$35 per couple. Two Days: \$40 individual; \$60 per couple

**Contact:** Email: shenet@ihug.co.nz, Ph.: (09) 478-3339. For a map of the area go to: [www.nzmaps.co.nz/viewmap.php3?Map=az17](http://www.nzmaps.co.nz/viewmap.php3?Map=az17). For more information on Diana Waring History Alive go to: [www.dianawaring.com](http://www.dianawaring.com)

**Seminar Speaker:** Diana Waring of History Alive!

**Hosted by:** Shore Home Educators Network and Home Education Foundation

#### Programme:

### Friday 23 January 2004

(From a Christian worldview)

**10:15am** Registration, Resource viewing, Morning Tea

**11:00am** Welcome

**11:30am** Session One: Ancient Civilisations & the Bible

**12:30pm** Lunch

**1:45pm** Session Two: Whatever Happened to Church History?

**2:45pm** Afternoon Tea

**3:30-4:30pm** Session Three: Raising World Changers

### Saturday 24 January 2004

(From a more general worldview)

**8:45am** Registration

**9:30am** Welcome

**9:45am** Session One: Roots and Wings

**10:45am** Morning Tea

**11:30am** Session Two: Unlocking the Mysteries of the Middle Ages

**12:30pm** Lunch

**1:45pm** Session Three: The Elements of Success: Learning Styles, Modalities & Intelligences

**2:45pm** Afternoon Tea

**3:30pm** Session Four: Things We Wish We'd Known — Panel Discussion

**6:00pm** Venue closes

## Mon 26 January 2004

### Rotorua Home Educators Seminar

**Venue:** Destiny Church, Cnr Tutanakai & Pukaki Strs, Rotorua

**Cost:** \$10.00 per person/couple

**Contact:** Kate, Ph: (07) 345-4135 [datamaki@xtra.co.nz](mailto:datamaki@xtra.co.nz)

**Keynote Speaker:** Diana Waring  
**Programme:**

**7:00pm** Registration

**7:30pm** Beyond Survival - Diana Waring

**8:30pm** Questions, supper and look at resources

## Thur 29 January 2004

### Wellington Home Educators Workshop

**Venue:** Rimutaka Baptist Church, Upper Hutt

**Contact:** Wendy (04) 526-3210

**Keynote Speaker:** Diana Waring  
**Programme:**

**1:30pm** Registrations

**2:00pm** Three sessions:

1. Heroes of the Faith - Diana Waring
2. Getting Started, Dealing with ERO, MOE exemption Application - Craig Smith
3. Keeping Going When the Going Gets Tough - Barbara Smith

**3:00pm** Afternoon Tea

**3:30pm** Elements of Success - Diana Waring

**4:30pm** View resources/Open question time

**6:00pm** Close

There may possibly be a creche and activities for children at the same venue so that mothers are free to attend.

## Sat 31 January 2004

### Manawatu Home Education Workshop

**Venue:** Reformed Church, 541 Ruahine St., Palmerston North.

Map at: [www.palm.org.nz/pnmap.asp?Mapxy=357,393&ID=33](http://www.palm.org.nz/pnmap.asp?Mapxy=357,393&ID=33)

**Cost:** \$25 per person/couple; youth \$5 with parents.

**Contact:** Barbara Ph: (06)357-4399, email: [hedf@xtra.co.nz](mailto:hedf@xtra.co.nz).

**Main Speaker:** Diana Waring.  
See [www.dianawaring.com](http://www.dianawaring.com)

#### Programme:

**8:45am** Registration

**9:30am** Welcome

**9:45am** Three Electives:

1. Raising World Changers (from a Biblical Worldview) - Diana Waring

2. Getting Started, dealing with MOE/ERO, pulling children out of school, filling in an exemption form, etc. - Craig Smith

3. Keeping Going When the Going Gets Tough - Barbara Smith

**10:45am** Morning Tea

**11.30pm** Keynote Session 1: Roots and Wings by Diana Waring

**12:30pm** Lunch

**1:45pm** Keynote Session 2: Got Teens! - Diana Waring

**2:45pm** Afternoon Tea

**3:30pm** Things We Wish We'd Known - Panel Discussion

**6:00pm** Venue closes

## Fri/Sat 6/7 February 2004

### Mainland Conference

**Venue:** Bishopdale Reformed Church, 92 Highsted Rd., Bishopdale, Christchurch

**Cost:** Thursday/Friday or Thursday/Saturday: \$25.00 single, \$35.00 per couple; Full weekend: \$40.00 single, \$60.00 per couple; \$5.00 per day per teenager accompanied by a parent. Pre-registration is required by 31 January 2004 to assist with organisation and catering.

**Contact:** Adrienne, ph. (03) 347-7168, [cheinc@free.net.nz](mailto:cheinc@free.net.nz)

**Main Speaker:** Diana Waring  
**Programme:**

### Thursday 5 February

**6.30pm** Registrations, resource viewing

**7.30pm** Welcome

**7.45pm** Keynote 1: Box Free Living.

**8.45pm** Supper & resource viewing

### Friday 6 February

**8.45am** Registration and resource viewing

**9.30am** Welcome

**9.45am** Keynote 2: Roots and Wings

**10.45am** Morning tea and resource viewing

**11.30am** Keynote 3: Unlocking the Mystery of the Middle Ages

**12.30pm** Lunch

**1.45pm** Keynote 4: Got Teens!

**2.45pm** Resource viewing

**3.30pm** Venue closes

Saturday 7 February

**8.45am** Registration and resource viewing

**9.30am** Welcome

**9.45am** Two Electives:

1. Heroes of the Faith — Diana Waring.
2. Avoiding Burnout: Symptoms, Causes, Strategies — Craig & Barbara Smith

**10.45am** Morning tea and resource viewing

**11.30am** Two Electives:

1. Whatever Happened to Church History? — Diana Waring
2. Books, Great Books and More Books: Creating your own library and how to use it — Barbara Smith

**12.30pm** Lunch

**1.45pm** Two Electives:

1. Raising World Changers — Diana Waring.
2. ERO Reviews — Lennie Harrison

**2.45pm** Afternoon tea and resource viewing

**3.30pm** Question time

**5:00pm** Resource Viewing

**6.00pm** Venue closes

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For more information, including registration forms for each event above, please visit: [www.HomeEducationFoundation.org.nz](http://www.HomeEducationFoundation.org.nz)

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Sat 13 March 2004

**Rotorua Home Educators Workshop**

**Venue:** Destiny Church, Cnr Tutanakai & Pukaki Sts, Rotorua

**Cost:** \$15.00 per person/couple, \$5.00 per session

**Contact:** Kate, Phone (07) 345-4135, [datamaki@xtra.co.nz](mailto:datamaki@xtra.co.nz)

**Speakers:** Craig and Barbara Smith

Sat 27 March 2004

**North Taranaki Home Educators Workshop**

**Venue:** Well of Life Family Church, 150 Ngamotu Road, New Plymouth

**Cost:** \$15.00 per person/couple, \$5.00 per session

**Contact:** Virginia (06) 751-3231 email: [bryan6@maxnet.co.nz](mailto:bryan6@maxnet.co.nz)

**Programme**

9:00am Registrations and view resources

9:15am Introductions

9:30am Two Electives

1. Getting started, dealing with MOE/ERO, pulling children out of School, filling in an exemption form, etc. - Craig Smith
2. Avoiding Burnout (Keeping Going When The Going Gets Tough) - Barbara Smith

10:30am Morning tea

11:00am Two Electives

3. Getting Things Into Perspective - Craig Smith

4. Classical Education (Training Children's Minds, Tools of Learning and Motivation) - Barbara Smith

12:30 Lunch - Bring your own, hot drinks provided.

1:30pm Two Electives

5. Home Educating Through Secondary and Preparing for Tertiary Education and the Workforce - Craig Smith

6. Training Children and Youth in Purity - Barbara Smith

3:00pm Afternoon Tea

3:30pm Two Electives

7. Home Education from a Biblical Perspective - Craig Smith

8. Books, Great Books and More Books - Creating your own library and how to use it - Barbara Smith

4:30pm Final look at resources

5:30pm Finish

Tue-Fri 18-21 January 2005

**Christian Worldview Conference**

**Venue:** Willowpark, Auckland

**Contact:** Carol: Ph. (09) 410-3933, Email [cesbooks@intouch.co.nz](mailto:cesbooks@intouch.co.nz)

**Keynote speaker:** R C Sproul, Jnr.



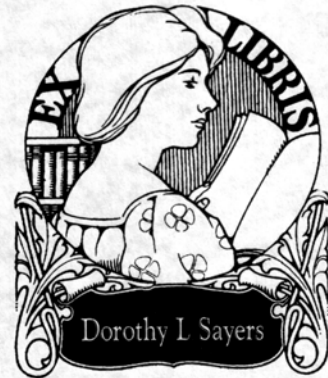
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