

### Questions in Parliament

A home educator went through his member of Parliament and got the following five questions put to the Minister of Education, the Hon Trevor Mallard. The Minister's replies are included. The questions were lodged on 11 August and the answers were received on 19 August.

**Question 1:** How many submissions has the Ministry of Education had regarding proposed changes to the granting of exemption certificates to home educators?

**Answer:** There are no proposed changes to the granting of exemption certificates to home schoolers.

**Question 2:** What consultation has he had with home educators regarding proposed changes to the Ministry of Education Desk File?

**Answer:** I have not personally consulted with home educators on what appears to be a relatively minor administrative change by the Ministry of Education.

**Question 3:** What changes is the Ministry of Education proposing with respect to granting exemption certificates to home educators?

**Answer:** The Ministry of Education is proposing some minor wording changes to the homeschooling exemption application form. No changes to the exemption process are proposed.

**Question 4:** How many exemption certificates for home educators has the Ministry cancelled each year since 1999 and what were the reasons for these cancellations?

**Answer:** The Ministry of Education has revoked homeschooling exemption certificates as per the following

table:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Exemptions Revoked</u>
1999	7
2000	3
2001	5
2002	1
2003	4
2004	4 (to date)

These certificates were revoked because the Ministry of Education, based on the Education Review Office's recommendations, was not satisfied that the students were being taught "at least as well and as regularly as in a registered school" [Education Act 1989 s21 (1) (b) (i)].

**Question 5:** Why is the Ministry of Education proposing changes to the Application for Exemption from Enrolment at a Registered School?

**Answer:** The Ministry of Education is proposing some minor changes in the wording of the homeschooling exemption application form to provide greater clarity and use correct terminology.

Look how few exemptions have been revoked over the years, an average of only 4.8 per annum! As the ERO has said, home educators are indeed a low risk group! Aside from that, not much of substance here unfortunately. The Minister insists that there are no proposed changes to the exemption process, but only some proposed minor wording changes to the exemption application form to provide greater clarity and use correct terminology.

### How Home Educators Can Access University

(The following is slightly edited from the Massey U. website.)

#### **Admission Qualifications**

New Zealand Citizens and Permanent Residents must qualify for admission through one of the following methods:

#### **NCEA Level 3 Achievement or Unit Standards**

You must gain a minimum of 42 credits at Level 3 or higher on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). NQF credits can be gained either from achievement standards or from unit standards. The required number of credits must include a minimum of 14 credits at Level 3 or higher in each of two subjects from the approved subject list, with a further 14 credits at Level 3 or higher

taken from no more than two additional approved subjects or domains on the NQF.

You must also have a minimum of 14 credits at Level 1 or higher in Mathematics on the NQF and a minimum of four credits in Reading and four credits in Writing at Level 2 or higher in English or Te Reo Maori. The literacy credits need to be selected from a schedule of approved achievement and unit standards. (Home educators can access NCEA achievement or unit standards. See following article "Getting NCEA" – Ed.)

#### **Or Discretionary Entrance**

If you are under the age of 20, and

*(Continued on page 5: Access)*

Well, it may seem like that from the MoE's end, but many home educators see it quite differently. The MoE has added the section which reads: "3.2.3.1 **Needs** - Describe your child's educational **needs**." This certainly is not clear because the terminology is vague and unfamiliar. Anecdotal information is that professional teachers asked this question also struggle to understand what it means. However the real issue to which home educators must object is that the rather personal and subjective information this request is probing for is not needed to fulfil the requirements of the Education Act that the child "will be taught at least as regularly and well as in a registered school."

The MoE has added to the draft application form section 3.2.3.3., which asks the applicant to "*Outline what you intend to cover with your child in different areas of your stated curriculum.*" This is fine, but then the section ends with, "*Whatever source of curriculum guidance you select, you should be specific about the skills you want your child to learn and you should be clear about the maturity level and abilities of your child in relation to your curriculum.*"

Again, this is certainly not clarifying things at all, not from a home educator's point of view. We are now being asked for *a lot more* additional information, some of which is personal and again quite subjective in nature (maturity levels and abilities). The home educators who met with Kay Phillips and Jim Matheson of the MoE in Wellington on July 19 heard that what they meant in asking about maturity levels and abilities was "is the applicant planning to teach material suitable to the child's maturity level and abilities". They want to know if your 12 year old is getting exposed mostly to material relevant to that age level and above, or is the child only getting new entrant level stuff. They apparently do not want applicants to describe the child's maturity level and abilities, which is pretty much what most of us thought they were after when we first read it.

Now considering this other part of the request in this section, that we specify the skills we want our child to learn: While it is generally thought to be a good idea among home educators that you have in mind a list of the skills you want your child to learn, for

the MoE to ask us to commit these to writing on the application form is going *ultra vires*, outside their legal powers. The Education Act only stipulates that the child be taught as regularly and well, etc., and says nothing about any learning outcomes or objectives in any area of skill, knowledge, understanding, attitudes or values. Home educators must not let themselves go down the road of listing what skills or knowledge we hope to teach *for the MoE's approval*. We can and perhaps we should share these things in our applications *for the MoE's information*, and we must certainly be giving these things our own serious consideration. But home educators

must help the MoE stay within the parameters of the Act and not let the MoE start insisting on us listing specific learning outcomes, for the outcomes are to be left to the family, not the MoE. If we do allow the MoE to insist on these kinds of things, it could so easily lead to insisting that we teach toward *approved* learning outcomes. Here is what I mean:

The letter from the Minister of Education himself, reproduced and commented on at length in last month's *TEACH Bulletin*, was suggesting that home educators team up with the MoE to formulate "*shared understandings about learning outcomes and other dimensions of quality.*" This is really scary. Why? Two reasons: first, it would end up being only those home educators who are inclined toward this kind of thing (organising others). Second, what could possibly be the purpose of it? To then have a "standard", ostensibly formulated by home educators, which the MoE could then impose on us all, whether we like it or not. Sure, the standards might be good, they might even be great! But with on-going talks and further manipulation and a bit of subtle pressure by the MoE and ERO — simply to make their jobs more standardised, less variable and therefore easier for them to administrate — home educators could end up saddling ourselves with requirements *only some of us* had a hand in formulating.... and even then the home educators were outnumbered and probably also outgunned by the two biggies also at the negotiating table: the MoE and the ERO.

Let us simply not go this route. There is no reason for us to do so: we have freedom and flexibility to lose and only state regulation to gain. And on top of it all, none of this kind of negotiation or working out shared understandings or stipulating outcomes is required by the Act! Why should home educators voluntarily submit to extra work and possible regulation when it has such potential 1) to fragment the home education community, setting the text-book types against the thematic types and the structured vs. the unstructured, and 2) to force any kind of standardisation on each of

## 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

# Trading Post



## For Sale:

Italic Handwriting Series, 3rd Edition, Getty & Dubay, Instruction Manual, 108 pages.....\$10  
Soft Toys to Sew, Sheila McGraw, 12 projects including patterns, colour photos and full instructions, 167 pages.....\$10  
How to Draw & Paint Landscapes by Stan Smith. Techniques, materials, demonstrations, 59 pages.....\$6

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us entirely unique families.

Then the draft exemption application adds a bit in Section 3.2.9., which is about Assessment and Evaluation. The first part says, "*Outline how you are going to assess and evaluate the progress your child is making.*" While it is true that questions about assessment, just like questions about social contact, are more examples of the MoE going *ultra vires*, outside what the law says is required, this part of the question has been on the exemption form for some time and does not present a problem. It only inquires about progress and not about what is being learned, to what standard anything is being learned or how effective the teaching is. While home educators are generally vitally interested in these things, the Act does not require the MoE to be satisfied with the assessment or the effectiveness of our teaching or even the child's progress, but only that the child be taught as well as in a registered school. This is not the same as the colloquial expression of being "well taught". As the ERO was quoted as saying in last month's *TEACH Bulletin*, there is no statutory requirement that *any* child be "well taught". All the MoE is required to look at is that the child will be taught as well as, the emphasis on the teaching, not on the effectiveness of the teaching.

But then in this section the draft exemption form adds, "*Please in-*

*clude how you will also evaluate your teaching methods in terms of your children's learning.*" This is the MoE wanting to get home educators to again go beyond what the Act requires and to evaluate their teaching effectiveness, indicating learning outcomes again, when the Act only requires that the child be taught as regularly and well. I will repeat it again: my understanding is that the Act talks about the teaching, how the child is taught, and not about how effectively the child is taught. This is based on the fact that there is no statutory or legal requirement for any child to be "well taught" as in "educated". Ultimately the coercive power of the state can only require the child to do time in the classroom; it cannot require or force the child to learn anything in particular. Therefore home educators cannot be held to a higher standard than state school teachers and be expected to evaluate how well they teach in terms of measurable, verifiable learning outcomes.

It would be quite reasonable to ask this of state school teachers, since they are being employed to deliver the right of all children to an "education". The fact is, of course, there is never any guarantee. Some students leave school illiterate. As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Social Development's Social Report of 2004 states that 26 percent of the population aged 25-64 years *had not* even attained an educational qualification of upper secondary level (pass in one subject in School Certificate). (<http://tinyurl.com/6tm38>).

This same report included the results of the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), apparently the only IALS so far, which showed how illiterate the average NZer is.....and it is shocking. 46 percent of NZ's population aged 16-65 did not have the ability to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction materials; a full 50 percent did not have the ability to locate and use information contained in formats, including maps, tables and job application forms; and 49 percent did not

have the ability to apply arithmetic operations to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a chequebook or completing an order form. In other words, very nearly half of New Zealand's adult population in 1996, only eight years ago, did not have "suitable minimum literacy skills for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society." To put it tersely, *half the country is illiterate*, mate. (<http://tinyurl.com/462ow>).

But there's more. The latest figures used in the Report for school leavers, from 2002, shows that over a third of them, 37 percent, left school after 10 years of compulsory attendance with *no qualifications at all* to show for the time they'd spend in the classroom. (<http://tinyurl.com/3jfr4>).

We know that doesn't mean they were all write-offs: many of them went into trade training or jobs. But it highlights the fact that the emphasis and manner in which the state promotes theoretical and intellectual academic acumen over all things else is highly problematic and does not accommodate huge tracts of reality and the people who dwell there. This narrowly focussed schooling system labels those who succeed in it as successful and those who do not — *just under half of the students* — as dummies or illiterates. Jim Matheson of the MoE told us recently that about 10% of home education exemption applications are turned down because of the applicants' illiteracy. But if these "illiterate" parents are a product and example of almost half of what the state school system produces, how then can the MoE reject their applications.....especially when the Act only requires that the child be taught as regularly and well as in a registered school...which we see by these literacy statistics means bringing them close to, but not quite reaching, a level of competent literacy? The mind boggles.

It also highlights the fact that the exemption process has the same tendency to want to view, define, regulate and pigeon-hole us home educators according to their narrow academic terms. The MoE's tendency is to issue or withhold an ex-

emption from us according to how well we conform to their concept of school, which is generally miles out from what home educators are embracing.

To have an exemption is to enter into a lifestyle radically different from the conventional one. Yet it is a lifestyle that is so personally fulfilling, contributes substantially to one's own self-improvement and strengthens the family bonds like little else around. The exemption represents for many home educators the difference between a closely knitted family or one that is atomized; a family working together on common goals or one that is like a bus stop; a family pulling together as a unit, all contributing to the family enterprise or one where each autonomous individual goes his or her own way, developing only his or her own private interests. To be denied an exemption is to be denied that family centred lifestyle and all the hopes that go with it.

What could be more easily understood, though rarely seen, than for parents to desire to raise up their own children according to their own family traditions, beliefs and culture? To be denied an exemption is to see one's children forced by law out of their own home for the greater part of each day to be tended to by total strangers who can rarely be counted upon to share even so much as a respect or an understanding of your family's values, standards, beliefs, customs or traditions. The classroom instead has its own values, standards, beliefs, customs and traditions, none of which are value-neutral, as Trevor Mallard himself has said. Consequently the exemption process can be quite intimidating and stressful *regardless* of what's on the form.

This is why so many home educators appeared rather touchy when the MoE started tinkering with the exemption application a couple of months ago. It is also why the wording on the exemption form is important and why any changes must be scrutinised carefully by home educators: *our very freedoms are at stake, the liberty to follow our chosen lifestyle, the freedom to fully take up and carry our responsibilities toward our own children.*

The new draft has added a privacy statement in which the MoE reserves to itself (not because the law requires it, but because they've come up with this policy about "safety") the right to pass an exemption applicant's private information to the Principal of the school the prospective home educator's child attends or the Public Health Nurse if the child has never attended a school. This has nothing to do with either providing greater clarity or using correct terminology, as the Minister said, but certainly raises a lot of offensive concerns about the degree of intervention the MoE wishes to reserve to itself. Jim Matheson of the MoE in Wellington made it clear they are checking prospective home educators for signs of child abuse or other dysfunction. One has to ask the question, What will they consider "dysfunctional" in the light of this government's apparent infatuation with raising the status of homosexuality, decriminalising prostitution and with hate speech crimes (read thought-control) waiting in the wings? Will those parents who teach that homosexuality is an immorally wrong perversion be deemed dysfunctional? How about those who refuse immunisations?

In any case, these present actions proposed in the draft exemption application are outside the powers given the MoE by the Act, are based on no evidence, are offensive in the extreme and are acts of discrimination against prospective home educating families who are assumed to be guilty of child abuse or some other dysfunction until proven innocent. Again, such actions are entirely appropriate for the MoE's own schooling institutions, but not for private families.

Just in case readers think the writer is stretching things a bit or is suffering paranoia, let me relate what happened at the TEACH Forum held over two days of Waitangi weekend in Palmerston North in 1998. Home educators had become aware that the blanket reviews by the ERO, just as they do them now, were way outside the ERO's or MoE's legal powers at the time (the Education Legislation Amendment Act of 1998

changed all that). The Act at the time only allowed the MoE to direct ERO reviews to take place if the MoE suspected an exempted family for some reason. ERO officer Tony Cross explained to the gathering that, until they could get the law changed, the MoE considered all home educators hypothetically suspect, because that way the MoE could, in its bureaucratic collective mind, then legally allow the ERO to systematically review all home educators.

In addition, the MoE has an embarrassing record of safety in its own schools: the bullying, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, pornography and weapons encountered mostly through other students, but occasionally through the teachers as well, are only starters. Then there is what many home educators would very strongly argue are the spiritually and emotionally harmful aspects of the sex education, sexuality education, drug education, death education and values education programmes.

The policy changes I see in the draft exemption application and the MoE's letter (see July's *TEACH Bulletin*), include the MoE wanting to introduce learning outcomes for home educators, seeing if our private homes constitute safe surroundings and suggesting that some home educators sit down with the MoE and the ERO and together draw up *shared understandings about learning outcomes*.

These apparent changes in policy are immensely alarming for three reasons: the MoE is moving to get home educators to do things well beyond what the Education Act requires of them, it is wanting to secure to itself powers of determining whether our home constitute "safe surroundings", and it is suggesting that it take to itself and/or share with home educating parents responsibilities which belong solely to the parents.

Forgive me, but this kind of political high-handedness is unacceptable to a free and responsible citizenry. And why would home educators want to join to develop "shared understandings" of anything with a system that is struggling to raise

standards when home educators, according to virtually every study done, are already doing better than average? Check out these few references for a start:

- 1) [www.fraserinstitute.ca/admin/books/files/homeschool.pdf](http://www.fraserinstitute.ca/admin/books/files/homeschool.pdf)
  - 2) <http://www.hslda.org/research/ray2003/Socialization.asp>
  - 3) <http://www.hslda.org/docs/study/comp2001/HomeSchoolAchievement.pdf>
- or
- 4) <http://www.hslda.org/docs/study/comp2001/default.asp>
  - 5) <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n8/> (Official Rudner study site with data in tabular form)
- or
- 6) <http://www.hslda.org/docs/study/rudner1999/Rudner0.asp>
  - 7) [www.nheri.org](http://www.nheri.org)

## Truancy

For some really stunning numbers, we need only look to the truancy figures of New Zealand state and integrated schools. Refer to Table 1.

The numbers are from early September 2002. If we take them as typical, we can see that on any particular Monday or Friday of the school year there will be over 19,000 children *truant* from school! That is, the MoE has no idea where they are or what they're up to, even though they compel the children to leave home and go to school. 19,000 is more than three times the entire number of home educators in New Zealand (just over 6,000)!

One can also see that on any Monday there is an *additional* 40,000 children absent from school for jus-

tifiable reasons such as sickness or note from the parents. The issue here is that home educated children are never absent or truant: they are at home or with their parents or elsewhere with the parent's knowledge. For most, since education is wrapped up and integrated into their lifestyle, and their lifestyle is saturated with learning and education, the idea of "missing out" on a day's learning by being absent or truant is simply an absurdity, a total non-issue.

As a bit of trivia, it is astounding then to read about some of the states in the U.S.A. that require *attendance records* for children who are home educated!! This is mindless bureaucracy at its best.

*(Continued from page 1: Access)*

not attempting to gain university entrance via NCEA, you may apply for Discretionary Entrance, which is based on NCEA Level 2 (or higher). (Provisional Enrolment has been replaced by Discretionary Entrance — Ed.)

You must be of above average academic ability, with a minimum of 14 credits in each of four Level 2 approved subjects and an overall grade average of at least 60. You must also meet the literacy and numeracy requirements for university entrance outlined for NCEA entrance. (Massey's Liaison Officer Trevor Weir says home educators will need to take examples of their work and have them assessed by a high school or other reputable academic provider as equivalent to NCEA Level 2 or higher — Ed.)

**Note:** The acceptance of a Discretionary Entrance application is dependent on the University's being able to process the application before the commencement of the course.

### Or Admission with Equivalent Status (AES)

You will either have completed an equivalent university entrance qualification overseas, or will have completed tertiary study in New Zealand which is at least equivalent to the entrance requirements under NCEA or the NZUEBS examinations.

(Each University has a Discretionary Entrance Officer. Massey's in Palmerston North is Michael Hardman. Always make enquiries well in advance, a year or two if possible — Ed.)

### Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)

A minimum of 120 points on the UCAS Tariff at CIE A or AS levels with a minimum grade of D in each of at least 3 subjects from the approved list and a minimum grade E in AS English and a minimum grade D in IGCSE Maths. (A home educating mum is acting as liaison with CIE: Christine at: whettons@clear.net.nz — Ed.)

### Or Special Admission

If you do not have any other entrance qualification and are at least 20 years of age before the starting date of the programme of study, you can be granted Special Admission. This applies for undergraduate study only. You will be asked to attach proof of age to the enrolment form (usually a birth certificate).

**Table 1:** Attendance and Absence in NZ Schools 2002. See <http://tinyurl.com/43ele>.

Day	Absence Rate		Truancy Rate	
	Number	%	Number	%
Monday	59,960	10.0	19,097	3.2
Tuesday	51,488	8.6	16,431	2.7
Wednesday	47,709	8.0	15,580	2.6
Thursday	48,180	8.1	16,334	2.7
Friday	52,665	8.8	19,361	3.2
Unspecified	674	0.1	115	0.0
Total	260,676	8.7	86,918	2.9

### Entry to Sub-degree Programmes

Entry to the Certificate of University Preparation (CertUniPrep) one-semester programme requires you to have: **either** a minimum of 14 Level 3 NCEA credits in an approved subject, and an overall total of 36 Level 3 NCEA credits **or** be at least 18 years of age and have been away from school for at least

18 months. Successful completion of this will provide a university entrance qualification.

**Note:** You cannot enter the Certificate of University Preparation straight from school without having completed a Year 13 year.

*Other Sub-degree Programmes* (eg Diploma in Catering and Hospitality, Diploma in Tourism and Travel, Legal Executives Course, Foundation Certificate in Design, Diploma in Agriculture, Certificate in PC Servicing, Certificate of Completion, Raukura, Certificate for Teacher Aides)

These programmes do not always require school-leavers to have undertaken Year 13 study. You will need to check the information for each programme for specific entry requirements as these vary from programme to programme.

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## Getting NCEA

(From: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/acrp/secondary/home-schoolers.html>)

### Assessment and Certification Rules and Procedures for Home Schools

Home schoolers and other persons who are not enrolled in a school are eligible to enter for standards through an accredited provider. Associated administrative costs are a matter for negotiation between the candidate and the provider. A home-schooled student who wishes to enter for achievement or unit standards must establish a link with a registered school, or an approved tertiary provider. The school, or tertiary provider, must have the relevant National Qualifications Framework accreditation.

### Entry and Eligibility

The home-schooled student, irrespective of the nature of the link school or tertiary provider, must meet all entry and eligibility criteria as specified in the Assessment and Certification *Rules and Procedures for Secondary Schools* for the year in which entry is made. There is no obligation on the part of any school or tertiary provider to act as a link school for home school students wishing to enter for NQF assess-

# Coming Events

## Thur, 23 Sept 2004

### Christchurch

#### Curriculum Evening

**Venue:** Bishopdale Reformed Church, 90 Highsted Road, Bishopdale, Christchurch,

**Time:** 4.00 - 8.00 p.m.

**Cost:** Gold coin entry.

**Contact:** Adrienne, braams@paradise.net.nz or phone (03) 347-7168.

Resources will be available to view and purchase from Learnex, Geneva Books, and other local companies.

Provision is being made for people to buy, sell or exchange their resources. Please RSVP to Adrienne.

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ment.

**Note:** It is not possible for home school students to enter SFC(t) subjects that are fully internally assessed or New Zealand Scholarship, which is restricted to students enrolled at a New Zealand secondary school or wharekura.

### Requirements

Before accepting an entry for any unit or achievement standard, the school's Principal's Nominee or the tertiary provider's Chief Executive's Nominee must be satisfied that: the assessment programme undertaken by the home schooled student is fair, valid, reliable, consistent and at the national standard; all relevant internally assessed work has been moderated by the school; the link school carries out the necessary administration tasks for entering home school students in examinations; the home school student's results will be processed along with those from the link school.

### Costs

A school or tertiary provider whose Principal's Nominee or Chief Executive's Nominee agrees on their behalf to perform the linking or any other services for home school students may, at its discretion, recover from the student(s) costs incurred in the process.

## 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 cesbooks@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*.

## Mon, 31 Jan 2005

### 5th Annual Home

#### Education Celebration

**Venue:** Auckland venue to be confirmed

**Contact:** Dawn Burgin burgins.of.auckland@xtra.co.nz

**Time:** 11am-3pm

Co-ordinated by Auckland Home Educators Inc

A popular gathering of 200+ parents, kids & supporters. Let's see how big we can make it for 2005! Fabulous opportunity to mix 'n mingle, buy/sell resources, enjoy a sense of belonging, play games, etc. If you're investigating the Home Education option, come and see first-hand what we're all about. Also refer to the poster in your local library & check out our website at [www.home-education.org.nz](http://www.home-education.org.nz)