

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 96

September 2005

MoE (Lower Hutt) PR Initiative a Success

The Lower Hutt Management Office of the MoE, those who process Exemption Applications for the Lower North Island, held a series of fairly informal Public Relations meetings during the month of August. The 2-hour get-togethers were held in Palmerston North, Levin, Dannevirke, Masterton, Lower Hutt, New Plymouth, Wanganui, Taihape, Johnsonville, Paraparaumu, Porirua and Upper Hutt. Jeanette Voyce was there at them all, with Peter Norton at least at the Palmerston North and Levin meetings. Jeanette is currently in charge of reviewing every exemption application in the Lower North Island area. The meetings included a power-point presentation and a Q & A time.

The presentation just reviewed the general situation, touching on things like access to NCEA, MoE resources and University, ERO visits and money. It was a great opportunity for the MoE to present their perspectives on these issues and to hear, first hand from many HEs, our perspectives on those issues.

This writer attended the Palmerston North, Dannevirke, Taihape and Johnsonville meetings. Each was so different in numbers attending, issues raised and the information exchanged. Often HEs attending had first hand accounts of how they got into University or accessed Special Education funding. Jeanette hopes to write up a report of all the questions raised that needed further research to answer. Some of the issues clarified for me or I didn't know about include:

*The MoE will look into having NZ Curriculum Documents and

other Learning Media publications placed into public libraries for access.

*15-year-old HEs can apply to Jeanette for an early release exemption under Section 22 of the Act, as long as the student is under a reasonably formal course of instruction and/or training for a certain duration. This can be on-the-job training or a course put together by the parents. At this point the student is released from compulsory attendance requirements as if he were 16, the home schooling allowance stops, but the student can now access the

NZ Correspondence School at the adult rate of \$80 per subject.

*Schools do not get funding for EOTC (Education Outside The Classroom). However, the state does fund LEOTC (Learning Experiences Outside The Classroom), in the form of discounted museum entrance fees and the like. It does seem iniquitous that HEs do not get this discount as well as schools.

*Insurance issues make some schools hesitant to allow HEs to join activities on and off campus. Each school is totally autonomous as to how it relates to HEs: there can be no national policy.

*HEs do have right of access to free hearing and sight tests and dental nurse treatment up to age 16. Contact a local health nurse.

*HEs who have reached the age of 16 can continue to receive the home education allowance until

NZQA Seeks Review of University Entrance

The deadline for responses is soon — 1 October — so move quickly.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority is reviewing the University Entrance requirements that apply to school leavers from NZ secondary schools and is seeking feedback from universities, schools and other stakeholders. We HEs fall into that last category: "other stakeholders."

By going to www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ue/standardreview.html or contacting Val Jolly at ph. (04) 463-4294, val.jolly@nzqa.govt.nz, one can download a consultation document.

This backgrounds issues raised by some sector groups and seeks

feedback on possible changes to the entrance standard. The group would appreciate receiving feedback on the options presented.

Additional fields of study or subjects will be considered for the list of approved subjects.

A summary of consultation responses will be sent to all respondents and published on the NZQA website.

The deadline for responses is **1 October 2005**.

Please Note: There will be no October issue of *TEACH Bulletin*, but we will make it up by publishing an issue in December.

the first of January after their 19th birthday, as long as they are being home educated, but not if they sign up for NZ Correspondence School courses, night school, University or polytech courses.

*Special Needs: from the MoE notes: "Parents who home educate a child "who would otherwise be likely to need special education" can seek advice and guidance from Group Special Education (GSE). Staff at each GSE office will respond in accordance with priorities that they have established for access to their services. Through GSE, parents will also have access to therapy and specialist support if their child has been verified as having high or very high needs under the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS). If necessary, Ministry staff should provide an application form for ORRS funding which should be returned by parents to the chief verifier."

The entire exercise seems to have been a very positive experience all around and a successful effort at improving communications and understandings.

Colossal Waste

The NCEA system is a "colossal waste of resources", and no government will admit to the scale of its mistake in implementing it, say top educationists.

An article in the *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, by Cedric Hall, Warwick Elley and Reg Marsh, says a recent State Services Commission review on the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) was "hard on the qualifications authority but too soft on solutions".

The article says the NCEA "has all the hallmarks of being a bottomless pit for draining educational resources" and is "unmanageable". "They have wasted millions of dollars trying to train teachers and develop resources in order to make the system work . . . This amount of investment itself is likely to become a reason for resisting change — no government is ever likely to admit that it has got it badly wrong when the scale of the operation matches that of the NCEA."

Key organisations such as the Education Ministry, New Zealand Vice Chancellors Committee and teacher and principal representatives had "failed either in their analysis or in their courage and did not exert pressure to bring about change." That so many organisations with "a vested interest in having a successful secondary level assessment system should show lack of understanding or lack of resolve in dealing with the very obvious failings of the NCEA, is a sad commentary on New Zealand's educational scene", the article says.

A big problem seemed to be the variation in how schools dealt with reassessments (what used to be called

"failing an exam"). Some schools allow students to take an internally assessed standard two or three times, while others give only one chance. Some will require students to take a different test the second time, while others will allow them to re-sit the same test.

But co-author Warwick Elley said teachers had a vested interest in getting as many students to pass as possible. "If a teacher says you can have another go next month, the student knows exactly what they have to do, and they can concentrate on it. It would be fairer to give them a parallel task." The "NCEA adventure" was a mistake and a colossal waste of resources, he said.

(*Sunday Star-Times*, 21 August 2005, "NCEA a huge drain on resources say critics", <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3384365a11,00.html>)

Pressurized Principals

Survey results from research done by the New Zealand Principals' Federation show that 40 percent of principals have high or extremely high levels of stress. Workloads of 65 hours a week are not uncommon. Principals' Federation executive member and Havelock School principal Ernie Buutveld said the association knew things were not healthy but was dismayed at the breadth and extent of issues the survey showed.

The pressures of the job led Renwick School principal Ian Mackey to take six months off work last year, his first break from the role in 17 years. Mr Mackey said the complexity of principals' jobs, long hours and constant change took their toll, and meeting the demands of parents, the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office could be a challenge. Schools were also dealing with more problem behaviours and taking on more of a social welfare role by default, he said.

Stress tended to come from three areas: pupils' behaviour, a lack of parental support or a break down in relationships. When relations between staff or parents deteriorated, principals "dried up" and became

TEACH Bulletin

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Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and reject not your mother's teaching.
— Proverbs 1:8

insular, creating a negative spiral. Another problem was boards of trustees delving into management rather than governance, which could cause “awful problems”.

(*Marlborough Express*, 15 August 2005, “Principals say they’re under more pressure”, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/marlboroughexpress/0,2106,3378451a6563,00.html>)

ICT Madness Strikes Ministry

Initial attempts to improve education outcomes by encouraging the use of leading-edge ICT (Information & Communication Technology) tools in schools have failed to deliver many of the desired benefits, according to a review conducted by the Education Ministry.

The four Digital Opportunities programmes reviewed by the ministry ran between 2001 and 2004. They were designed to reduce the digital divide and raise student achievement, particularly in maths, technology and the sciences.

The review was positive overall, with students generally feeling their ICT skills and confidence had improved after participating. However, none of the projects made a significant impact in encouraging students to pursue studies in maths or science, or on students staying in school.

With the Generation XP project, which trained students to become Microsoft Office specialists, and the Digitally Boosted Study Support Centres project, which provided ICT and online content for after-school study centres, many schools didn’t feel there was a true partnership. Instead they felt “dumped on” after being given the technology and lesson plans and told to make do, according to the review. Teachers were also dissatisfied with the training that was offered through Generation XP.

Another DigiOps initiative, Notebook Valley, provided students with laptops to help incorporate ICT into lesson plans. However, sometimes there were not enough laptops for a whole class, and teachers com-

plained that there was no clear guidance on how they were to be used in the classroom. Some students who were given laptops decided to leave them at home because there were too few chances to use them during the school day.

The fourth initiative, FarNet, created virtual learning communities of teachers in 10 schools in the Far North, hosted on a dedicated website. However, the content posted online mostly comprised electronic versions of printed material, with teachers seemingly reluctant to post their own resources.

The results of the review were used to plan and develop the second wave of DigiOps projects, which now number 13. (If the first wave didn’t deliver, why throw more money away on a second wave? – Ed.) This second wave includes “Digital Bridges”, which involves the use of mobile phones and emails to teach English to migrant students, and the “ChaOS” programme which has seen students at Brooklyn Primary School kitted out with PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) and tablet PCs.

HEs can be tempted to think we are also “entitled” to the generosity that Uncle Trevor (Mallard) shows when using other people’s money. This is precisely what state schools in Alaska and California are doing very successfully to lure HEs back into the state education camp. Beware!

(*Dominion Post*, 5 September 2005, “Digital opportunities falls short of ideal”, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3399576a7694,00.html>)

The “Autonomous Self”

834 pupils were excluded from schools during the first half of this year, and principals say they need more help to deal with dysfunctional children.

Continual disobedience was the most common reason, and drug use came a close second. Violent

assaults, sexual harassment, theft, vandalism and use of weapons were also listed. Wainuiomata High School Principal Rob Mill said the school could not tolerate behaviour that had a negative impact on the rest of the school. “We won’t accept violence, we won’t accept drugs and we expect a reasonable standard of behaviour.”

Mr Mill said it was unfair to blame schools for high numbers of expulsions. Society needed to take greater responsibility for children with behaviour problems and social workers in every primary school “would certainly help”. “I don’t know what the answer is, but there has usually been a breakdown in a whole range of things.”

(*The Press*, “Schools eject more than 800 students”, 2 September 2005, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/thepress/0,2106,3396855a6427,00.html>)

Mr Mill suggests “society” take greater responsibility. Who exactly is he talking about? We HEs are part of society. Are these hooligans our responsibility? Is their bad behaviour our fault? Have we contributed to their delinquency? Aren’t schools also part of society? Shouldn’t they then bear their share of responsibility?

It is clearly a problem of a growing number of dysfunctional families producing a growing number of dysfunctional children. Responsibility is definitely the issue, and the question is, “Who is responsible?”

New Zealand has had a compulsory schooling system for at least four generations. Can you imagine the huge impact on the society of the day, back in 1877, when the first school bells rang after it became compulsory for all children to be in school at 9am? The normal family structure, the expectations of children and parents, the role of parents in the socialisation of their children, the composition of people in the streets, the incidental and conversational educational opportunities of parents with their children throughout the day, the tutoring, the mentoring, the natural family apprenticeships that took place, the cohesiveness of the family bond, the

time children spent under their parents' influence, the family-centred focal point of each community: all this was changed forever.

Children's loyalties were divided among different authority structures: parents were now only one voice in the child's life, vying for attention with the teacher and the peer group. Many more influences affected the child than just his parents' moral instruction and world view. The focal point of the community shifted from the church or the family or the common occupations to the school house.

The state-run schoolhouse is now the unchallenged focal point and center of virtually all community activity. Parents have had a fair bit of their authority over their children simply taken from them via this compulsory schooling system. After four generations of the effects of compulsory schooling, there is now virtually no memory even left in families of how parents once just naturally shouldered responsibility for their children's socialisation, education, behaviour, debts, damages, etc. That is, parents have increasingly over the decades ceded more and more authority and responsibility (the two go hand in hand) to competing authorities and mentor figures in their children's lives: teachers and peers at first, with the addition more latterly of entertainers and entertainments (like interactive video games), and now the "Autonomous Self", the self-contained, self-centred individual. When people do little more than "look out for number one" as the autonomous self will do, there is no incentive to commit to anything outside of yourself: marriage and parenthood are not even on the menu.

Home Educators, for all their vastly differing philosophies and world views, are again shouldering their own personal responsibilities as parents toward their children's education and socialisation and inculcating this concept of responsibility into their children as well.

Forgive me, Mr Mill, but we home educators are not part of the problem....we represent the solution.

When Breakfast Leads to Greater Harm

Rotorua teacher Bea Yates regularly sees children so hungry their school work suffers. She has operated a soup kitchen at Lakes High School for the past 20 years and is backing calls to introduce free breakfasts into lower decile schools. "We need breakfast clubs in some schools. I see kids going hungry every day," said Mrs Yates who has a hot water heater in her classroom and provides soup, noodles, Milo, toast and other quickly prepared meals for students.

A recent report commissioned by the Child Poverty Action Group, "Hard To Swallow: Foodbank Use in New Zealand", says many children from poorer families are attending school without being fed. It says free breakfasts should be on the menu at schools.

"There is a lot of hardship in our communities, but lots of parents need to know they can't spend all the money on pokies, beer and the races and then send their kids to school with nothing in their bellies. That's just bad parenting," says Mrs Yates. But what can teachers do to remedy the real problem? Very little. So they do what they can do: provide breakfast for their students.

And it is this very act of compassion that will ensure that the problem will continue.

When the state gets involved in areas it should stay out of, such as compulsory schooling, supposedly to improve academic standards and free up parents to pursue more productive lives apart from their children, it is an historical fact that over time not only do we see academic standards fall, but we also see parents pursuing more degenerative lives given over to irresponsible excesses (what Mrs Yates called "pokies, beer and the races").

Other central North Island schools are also welcoming calls to provide meals for children from poor

homes but say they need extra staff to make and distribute the meals. Rotorua's Sunset Primary School had provided breakfasts in the past for hungry pupils but finding sponsorship and staff to operate it had been difficult, principal Neils Rasmussen said. "When we had it going, teachers would arrive at school at 7.30am in the morning to do the breakfast, and then they had to teach a class for the whole day. "It just got a bit much for them." State schools tend to gobble up more of the staff's time as well as most of the student's time. It will both feed and baby sit children before school and provide sports and music and "study clubs" (baby sitting) after school, plus home work assignments at home, lest too much time be left for private family pursuits.

Tokoroa's Tainui Full Primary School principal Richard Peters said it was important to ensure things were handled sensitively if breakfast clubs were introduced to schools. "It's really important that kids are not singled out and for them to keep their dignity intact. There can be stigma attached with providing free lunches or breakfasts," he said. So what is the answer? Free food for one and all, whether they need it or not. Another responsibility lifted from parents.

Rotorua's Western Heights Primary School principal Brent Griffin said in the past free breakfasts had been provided at the school, but staff had found many children were double dipping after having breakfast at home.

(NZPA, 18 August 2005, "Teacher backs call for school breakfasts," <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3381231a7694,00.html>)

It is good to see that such things are recognised as happening, but if the pressure for free breakfasts does not abate, the easy road will be followed: it is far easier to tax one and all to buy breakfasts than to address the decaying culture of irresponsibility to which these free breakfasts are contributing factors, along with the many other contributing factors contributed by state compulsory schooling.

Primary School Invites Criminals on Campus

A 17-year-old youth known to be the subject of sexual misconduct allegations raped an eight-year-old Christchurch girl after being sent to her school for community work by the Corrections Department. Community Probation Service southern regional manager Paul Tomlinson confirmed the department was aware of sexual allegations before placing the offender in the Phillipstown School, but the youth had no convictions for sexual offences. He had been convicted on a theft charge.

“The information about these allegations was not passed to those responsible for managing his community work sentence. The Christchurch area manager has since changed procedures to improve communication between staff,” Tomlinson said.

This youth violated the girl after taking her and her brother to a neighbourhood playground out of school hours. While being interviewed by police, the offender claimed that his victim and her brother (the youth was also being investigated for a sexual offence against the brother) had been involved in sexual activity in the past. This got CYF into the act: believing the false allegations of the offender, they immediately removed the 12-year-old brother from his mother who was already devastated by what had happened to her daughter. “We knew it wasn’t true and the police knew that it wasn’t true but CYF came in,” the mother said.

The abuse suffered by this family at the hands of CYFs is bad enough. But Phillipstown School principal Tony Simpson said the board of trustees had a “mutually beneficial”, long-standing arrangement with Corrections regarding community work placements, which supposedly included rigorous vetting procedures. Let’s just review that slowly: the school has had a long-standing deal with the people who run the prisons, that they would send convicted criminals on a regular basis out to the school to do some kind of

“community service” among, alongside, with or at least near the school children.

I am so glad that we home educate. I congratulate every parent who has rescued his children from these unbelievable institutions. What kind of warped thinking is it that caused this principal to decide that his school is not suffering from bullying or drugs or vandalism or disobedience to the extent that he can invite those things and worse by having convicted criminals regularly on campus among the children? He is very generous with the virtue of other people’s children.

The distraught mother said, “I’ve had a gutsful. I feel like I want to buy a gun and shoot everybody.”

(*The Press*, 7 September 2005, “Offender on school work rapes girl, 8,” <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3402107a10,00.html>)

Neither Competent nor Capable

Someone wrote the following on an email list I’m a member of:

“I personally am glad the MOE is there to ensure that homeschooled students are getting a good education and are not suffering neglect (benign or otherwise).”

I am moved to comment. I’ve been monitoring the New Zealand state school system for the past 25 years. I’ve been publishing this *TEACH Bulletin* for 11 months of the year for the past 8 1/2 years, and virtually every issue has horrendous tales of what goes on in NZ state schools. The previous six articles in this one issue are all less than a month old, as I write. My considered opinion is that the MoE simply is not qualified — no let me re-phrase that — the MoE is neither competent nor capable of ensuring that anyone is getting a good education.

As I think about it, this is more than my twisted world view: this is demonstrable fact. Read John Holt, Ivan Illich, Raymond

Moore, Alan Peachy (Rangitoto College Head), David Hood (who was NZQA’s founding Chief Executive), Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt and John Taylor Gatto. I am utterly convinced that the state has no business being in the compulsory “education” business. They can only create mayhem and destruction. Any good or actual education that takes place in these institutions is because of the vision and commitment of the parents who train up and discipline their children to value learning; and this is in spite of the schooling system, not because of it.

Home Education Is Undeniably Best

A lot of the claims and statements of the negative critics of home education are tripe, worthless. I believe some of them think they have to make these claims to defend a system in which they received their schooling or from which they currently get their bread and butter. One of the most robust things that advocates of parent-led home-based education have going for them, however, is that there is no research (of which I know) that supports the claim that being in institutional schools (whether state-controlled or private) causes children and young people to be or to become adults who are better off academically, socially or psychologically or more beneficial members of society. In fact, the empirical evidence that exists indicates the contrary.

I enjoy being in courts and legislatures and testifying to this and thereby educating judges, guardians *ad litem* and legislators. And I like helping attorneys and others ask the negative claimants (e.g., professors, teachers’ union officials, public- and private-school teachers, etc.) to provide the empirical evidence that age-segregated institutional schooling with state-certified teachers creates youth and adults who are more socially, emotionally and psychologically healthy than the home educated; who are more kind to their neighbors, more tolerant of varying opinions (i.e., understanding, not necessarily agreeable to or

(Continued on page 6: **Best**)

Coming Events

Speakers at Christchurch and Auckland:

Steve Demme from USA, author of award-winning MATHS U SEE Programme, was a school principal and maths teacher who saw the need for a better way to teach and learn maths. He will not be pushing MATHS U SEE but speaking on how to make maths relevant to everyday life. He has also served in pastoral ministry, and he and his wife have home educated their 4 sons, one of whom is a special needs child.

Anthony White, from Victoria, Australia, was a senior executive with some of the biggest service firms in the world in Management consulting; IRD Australia, Telstra Optus, Mt Isa Mines, Elders, Queensland Health. He was an engineer in the Australian Army, British Aerospace, Venture Capital fund raiser/financier and now he is a farmer and home educating dad.

Thur-Fri, 6-7 Oct 2005

Christchurch Home Education Conference

Keynote Speakers:

Steve Demme

Anthony White

Venue: Rutland St. Chapel, Rutland St., St Albans, Christchurch.

Cost: One day: Single=\$10, Couple/Family=\$15. Two days: Single=\$15, Couple/Family=\$25.

Contact: Dot, ph. (03) 312-8790, i.brown@ext.canterbury.ac.nz

Sat, 8 Oct 2005

Manukau Homeschool Support Group: Maths, Molecules & Motivation.

Venue: St Andrews Presbyterian Church, 150 Great South Road Manurewa, Auckland.

Cost: Pre-registrations receive a \$5 discount over those that arrive on the day without pre-registering. Pre-registrations close on Monday 3rd of October and payment **MUST** be received in full by that time. Costs (including \$5 discount):

Single, \$25

Couple, \$35 per couple

Student, \$10 (14yrs and over)

Evening only - \$5 per person

Contact: Shona Rakete, PO Box 7534, Manurewa, Phone: (09) 269 5646 wsrakete@otg.quik.co.nz

Registrations on line: www.learnex.co.nz/conference

Programme

8.45am Registration and viewing of resources

9.30am Welcome and introduction of Keynote Speaker: Sue Abernethy, homeschooling mum of 7.

10.30am Morning Tea (provided)

10.50am Workshop One

1 What to Expect from an ERO visit - Rob Williamson

2 Classical Education - Robyn Mellar-Smith & Michelle Jorgensen

3 Educating the gifted child - Chantelle Philip

4 Connections: maths, ministry and the real world (from a Christian perspective) - **Anthony White; Math-U-See Australasia, South East Asia**

5 A Phonics Based Approach to Teaching Reading - Dorinda Duthie

6 Enjoying life with your teenagers: a discussion offering encouragement and support (exclusively for parents of teenagers) - Denise Walmsley

12.00pm Lunch (available to purchase or BYO) and resource viewing

1.00pm Welcome and introduction of Keynote Speaker: **Steve Demme, creator of Math-U-See**

2.20pm Workshop Two

1 Getting started and applying for an exemption - Kay Christensen

2 Introduction to the Charlotte Mason Approach - Sarah Ghent & Sonia Ray

3 Avoiding and Fighting Back from Burnout - Denise Walmsley

4 Science - Rosalind Peterson/Karla Burton

5 Teaching a Second Language - Meg Wilson & Erena Fussell

6 Homeschooling: The Father's Role - Steve Abernethy

3.20pm Afternoon Tea (provided) and resource viewing

3.50pm Workshop Three

1 Negotiating the Curriculum Maze - Carol Munroe

2 Studying NZ: a unit study perspective - Christine Whetton

3 Learning disabilities/delays - **Steve Demme; founder of Math-U-See**

4 History from a Literature Perspective - Robyn Mellar-Smith

5 Marriage enrichment for wives - Sue Abernethy (from a Christian perspective)

6 Organisation for the organisationally challenged - Sharon Drinnan

5pm Veteran panel - Q & A

6pm Tea/Dinner - make your own arrangements. Viewing of resources

7pm Venue open for final viewing of resources

7.30pm Welcome and introduction. Approaching maths with mind and hands - Keynote speaker: **Steve Demme; creator of Math-U-See**

9.15pm End of programme

16-22 October 2005

Home Education

Awareness Week

Check out what is on or create something for your own area

Sat, 29 October 2005

10th Annual

Home & Country Show, Manawatu

Contact: Lynne Prior (06) 353-6840 dca@xtra.co.nz

(For more information on Coming Events throughout the month, see www.hef.org.nz and click on Coming Events)

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compromising of their own views), more involved in community service, less frequently on welfare, less often felons and more civically engaged in this democratic republic. They cannot do it. Be patient, let your zeal for truth continue to burn brightly, teach the truth and let the light of your children and families shine.

(And this fellow should know: he is Dr Brian Ray, Founder and President of the National Home Education Research Institute, PO Box 13939, Salem, OR 97309, U.S.A. Ph (503) 364-1490, Fax (503) 364-2827, www.nheri.org.

His Ph.D. is in science education from Oregon State University, his M.S. in zoology from Ohio University, and his B.S. in biology from the University of Puget Sound. Dr. Ray has been a middle school and high school classroom teacher in both public and private schools, an undergraduate college professor, and a university professor at the graduate level. He is a leading international expert with regard to homeschool (home school, home education) research. Dr. Ray executes and publishes research, speaks to the public, testifies before legislators and serves as an expert witness in courts.)