

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

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Committee to Watch Us Closely This Year

The Education and Science Select Committee presented to Parliament and the NZ Public a Financial Review of the ERO for 1996/97 on the 12th of February 1998. The report contained five paragraphs on home schooling. These few words are very instructive to observant home educators when it comes to how they might relate to the ERO and review officers. The Report's five paragraphs are reprinted below verbatim.

In its annual report, the (Education Review) office notes that it is working on the process that will be adopted to start reporting on the education of home schooled children from the beginning of this year. Given that there are a variety of different social groups who educate their children at home, we asked who they were and how the office will assess the education they provide to their children. The office noted that there were three main groups two of which presented difficulty, namely a conservative Christian group and an ultra-liberal group. The first group used teaching material mainly from the United States. It is difficult for the office to evaluate the quality of teaching provided that is based on this material and it will take the office time to assess whether what is being offered suits children's learning. The second group, the ultra-liberal group, presented its own reviewing difficulty in that this group did not usually keep written records of what was taught. We enquired, therefore, about how the office intends to conduct these reviews. The office informed us that it will use nine

specialist reviewers rather than all reviewers for home schooling reviews as occurred when the office last conducted these reviews in 1993. The office hopes that this approach will ensure both it and the individual reviewers gain a complete overview of the key issues and the diversity of teaching approaches inherent in home schooling.

As people who home school their children have taken a deliberate step not to have the state involved in their children's formal education, we enquired how the process of reviewing will work. The office pointed out that it has no legal right to enter the place where the teaching occurs, although this has not been a problem in the past. The review can take place in an-

other location if necessary. As the process starts with a letter or telephone call from the reviewer, the review is not sudden or unexpected. A review takes about half a day. The review is normally a positive experience for the home schooling adults.

Given that the environment and culture of a school is important for the education of children in state schools, we enquired about the rationale for not insisting on reviews of home schooled children at the place of teaching. The office explained that, when a legislative amendment was proposed in 1993, the matter of giving reviewers a legal right to enter property was discussed but not included. The office was not perturbed by this potential barrier to its work, because if it has reservations about a particular learning environment, it can recommend to the Secretary for Education that the certificate of exemption to

We Don't Know How Lucky We Are, Mate !

Greetings! My name is Leslee Clark and I am writing to you from Pennsylvania, USA. My husband & I homeschool the four children we have been blessed with, ages 10, 8, 5 & 3. We live in a small town (5,000 pop.) in the southern part of the state, about 2hrs from Washington D.C., Pittsburgh, Pa., and Harrisburg, Pa. (our state capital).

We are learning about life in your country. What types of laws/requirements do you have there? We have quite a few "hoops to jump through" here in Pa. We are required to turn in objectives, medical information, and notarized affidavits at the beginning

of the year. The regulations state that 180 days/900hours are to be completed. At the end, we are to put together a portfolio of work for each child and the "log" or accounting for our days of school. This is then looked over by a third-party, or "evaluator" who then writes up a summary of all this information for the school district. Testing is to be done in grades 3, 5 & 8. Phew! Then of course we are supposed to educate the children, too!

I had been in public education before coming home nearly ten years ago. My husband helps with classes such as science, Greek & Latin roots, and P.E.

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TEACH Bulletin

is a monthly publication of TEACH Publications and is concerned with those things which may impact on home educators. Articles will deal with political developments, stats and professional trends, correspondence with educationalists, and other items of general interest to home educators. There is also a regular opinion poll regarding educational issues of the day that may impact home schoolers.

TEACH Bulletin is available for a subscription of \$10 per year for 11 issues (none in December), or by becoming a member of TEACH for a duration of 5, 10 or more. Some of the benefits of membership are:

- Discounts on Christian Home Schoolers of NZ National Family Conference fees
- Discounts on TEACH National Leadership Forum fees
- Coaching on how to participate in the Parliamentary process via letter writing, making submissions, lobbying MPs, etc.
- An annual free gift
- Discount on resources, books, T-Shirts, etc.
- Discounts on Sunshine Educational coach tours
- An official TEACH tax-deductible receipt for your donation

Your donation toward membership also helps to develop further services, exclusively for home schoolers, such as scholarships, summer schools, national tours by overseas experts, curriculum, and home school resource fairs, national and international field trips.

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

teach at home should be revoked. The office stated that there had never been a confrontation on the front doorstep of a home schooling adult.

Another apparent shortcoming with home schooling reviews we raised was that the teaching adults could not be assessed on their teaching performance in the way that teachers in state schools were assessed. The office noted in response that it assessed children's learning outcomes not teaching performance. This position raised for us how well taught home schooled children might be in comparison with those in state schools. The office advised us that there was no statutory requirement for any child to be well taught.

The resumption of home schooling reviews has been supported by us previously. We intend to follow this topic closely this year.

Editor's Comments

My favourite line is the last of the fourth paragraph: "The office advised us that there was no statutory requirement for any child to be well taught." It is a classic example of eloquent simplicity. It is telling us that in all of the millions and millions of dollars spent on teacher training college buildings, staff wages and development, on curriculum development and effective classroom technique, on the hundreds of school buildings all over the country, on insurance and maintainance, on teachers' wages, on administrators and cleaners, on books, science equipment, educational toys, on sports equipment and uniforms and transportation and board meetings and a Ministry of Education housed in a huge, beautiful building on expensive real estate in the heart of Wellington filled with well-paid public servants....that in all of that THERE ARE NO STANDARDS!!!!

The law does not state that registered teachers must teach children to read, write and add to a certain level. The law does not specify

that reading or writing or addition even be part of the school curriculum!! Legally speaking, there are no educational standards. This is a bit of a concern.....children can be legally compelled to attend school, but they cannot legally be compelled to learn anything. And if they do NOT learn anything after 10 years in the system, who is held to be responsible? Who CAN be held responsible.....legally responsible. Well, it sure isn't the schools, because they are not legally required to teach anything in particular (with the possible exception of sex education, mentioned in Sections 105C & D of the Education Act of 1964) to any particular standard....although Section 77 of the Act 1964 says whatever is taught must be entirely of a secular character. The Act actually says more in relation to Private Schools. They at least must inculcate "sentiments of patriotism and loyalty" [Section 35A(1)(c)].

At the beginning of the third paragraph, the Committee reveals that it considers the educational environment to be important. The ERO rightly considers it intrusive to legally require parents to let review officers into their homes. It seems the Committee may not be likewise convinced. This is an area home educators need to watch carefully. As the Report says, a Bill was introduced in 1993 to give ERO officers automatic right of entry into private homes (police do not have such power). Concerted efforts of home educators at the time promising civil disobedience helped convince the legislators to amend the Bill. The kind of thinking behind that defeated 1993 proposal is still around, so beware.

The Committee also indicated they were concerned that parents cannot be assessed as to their competence to teach. Home educators must watch this closely. Some states in the USA require parents to be state registered teachers. The Committee concludes with a promise to watch us closely.

Trading Post



For Sale

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Spelling & Poetry 2 (slightly used)\$8

A Beka Spelling, Vocabulary, Poetry 5 (Teacher's Edition).....\$8

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Gayle Graham, "How To Teach Any Child To Spell" (Unused)\$5

Gayle Graham, "Tricks of the Trade"- Children's Spelling Notebook, (slightly used).....\$5

Contact:

Robyn Smith
326D Gordonton Rd
R.D. 1, Hamilton
Ph. (07) 855-9265
email: robyn_smith@clear.net.nz

Wanted:

Saxon Math 65 and 87 (for 1999). Create your own Unit Study (by Valerie Bendt).

Contact:

Tania Thomas
phone (09) 4839014
or email pthomas@ihug.co.nz

Wanted:

Saxon Math 54, 65, 76, 87

Contact:

Sam & Cheryl Brunke
132 McMurdo St.
Ashburton
ph. (03) 308-2606

For Sale:

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Maths, Science, English, Bible, Social Studies: 200s, 300s, 400s, 500s, 600s & 700s. Art 1 & Basic Art Curriculum. Most not used. Offers.

Contact:

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ph. (07) 571-8372
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Wanted:

"Teach your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons" by Siefried Engelmann.

Contact:

Jennifer Raikes
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K5 Beginnings: Home Teachers Manuals A,B,C; worktext B & C; Reader set -13 books; Phonics chart; teaching visuals chart; teachers helpers chart; student response cards; 3 cassettes.....\$180

Maths K5: Teachers Manual, teaching charts, home teachers packet.....\$50

Music Grade 1: Teachers edition, student text, student worktext x 2, set of 5 cassettes.....\$100

Mathemactions — Simply Symmetry: workbook & manipulatives to teach shape and symmetry...\$30

Contact:

Shelley
ph. (04) 564-4716

Letters



Well Done

I just wanted to thank you for your efforts in sharing information about the Education Amendment Bill. When you began putting the news about the Bill into TEACH it became clear that there would be a lot of strong feelings about it from home educators around the country, but when I read that there had been 125 submissions from home educators out of a total of 177, on the Bill, it really brought home to me what you have achieved with TEACH.

Your wide network across the country must really have kicked into action, so you should feel proud of your contribution to the raising of political consciousness in the country.

Having heard some of the debate in Parliament on June 25, I can only conclude that home educators must be making themselves known to their MPs, as most of the speeches made direct mention of constituents who are home educating and the strong commitment and passion for it that has been shown.

Please convey my congratulations to your TEACH readership. Thank you all for getting involved and making your opinions about the Bill known to government. Keep up the good work.

Kate Jaunay
HENA Editor

Electronic Pen Pal

I live in Sulphur Springs, Texas, USA. This is my first year to home school. My husband and I have two boys, 5 and 2. Garrett is now in the 1st grade ABeka curriculum. I would love for him to have a pen pal in New Zealand. What a learning experience it would be to learn about your traditions, special holidays, etc. Hope to hear from you soon.

Cathy Gray
dbaucom@neto.com

Teenagers

I am trying to organize a home-schooled teenagers penpal group. If you know of anyone who would be interested or would like to become involved...please email me. My group is based in Colorado Springs, CO, USA.

CSHigh@aol.com

Canadian Christians

We are a Christian home schooling family in Canada. I am sending this correspondence to see if there might be anyone interested in becoming penpals with two boys ages 10 and 11. They are interested in sports, drawing, computers, lego, etc. and would be interested in corresponding with other home schooling boys from your country.

Alison Bumstead
Calgary, Canada
bumstead@cadvision.com

Education for Citizenship

(The following excerpts are from a paper presented by Dr John A. Codd, Professor of Policy Studies in Education, Massey University College of Education, to a conference in Palmerston North, 11-13 April 1997. Editorial comments and explanations have been added in italics.)

Leadership Vacuum

In my view, what we have at the present time in our country is an educational paradox. We have an enormous groundswell of leadership and potential leadership at the grassroots level of the school and community (*this is, of course, the home education movement, but I believe he overlooked us when writing this article*), while at the same time we have a crisis of leadership, in fact a leadership vacuum, at the level of national policy.

It is my view that there is an appalling lack of educational leadership or vision coming from the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority or any other part of the central bureaucracy. What we have, it seems at times, is not a Ministry of Education but rather a Ministry against Education. What we need is a Ministry for Education. Ministry officials are no longer educators. They are policy analysts. Most have no experience in education. They may have a degree in economics or perhaps in business management. A 1996 audit of the Ministry revealed that 40% of the staff in four policy sections had less than two years experience in the Ministry.

The Education Review Office functions more like an Education Inquisition Office. (*Amen!*)

The NZQA might be more appropriately called the NZ Complications Authority as the Framework keeps adding more and more complexity to the work of teachers. There are many fundamental problems with the rationale of the

Framework and the whole concept of unit standards. Suffice it to say that the whole system is growing into a bureaucratic monster — leaving teachers no time to teach because they are required to do so much assessment.

Competing Views

(There are) two very different and I believe competing views of the purposes of education. The first is the more traditional liberal-democratic view, which emphasises social justice, equality of opportunity and fairness. The second is the more recent market-liberal view, which emphasises individual freedom, competition and choice. (*And we poor parents thought the purposes of education was to teach basic skills and knowledge. Such simpletons!*)

(There) is a contest between two opposing theories, each based upon a different set of assumptions, and each having a fundamentally different conception of the role of the state in the provision of education. On one side we have what I would call the social justice model of education, based upon the premise that education is a basic human right, a public good to be provided by the state and distributed through democratic processes. On the other side, we have what I would call the market-liberal model of education, based upon the premise that education is both a prerequisite for economic productivity and a commodity, or private good, to be competed for and distributed through market forces.

ERO: Market-Liberal Side

The ERO is a central agency of the state whose policies are legitimated entirely by the assumptions of market-liberalism. Its core functions derive from two highly questionable assumptions: that the teaching profession, on the whole, cannot be trusted; and that schools, like supermarkets or second-hand car yards, can be evaluated, compared and publicly rated in terms of their effectiveness and value-for-money. The ERO, in my view, contributes di-

rectly almost nothing to the quality of education and some of its practices have the potential to cause serious educational harm. (*Such as warning families they better shape up while saying, "I'll be back" in three months for a follow up review. Or worse, suggesting the exemption be revoked based on a total misunderstanding of basic home educational philosophies and methodologies.*)

As stewards of the education estate we must now decide which path we will take. Whereas current policies aim to prepare young people for the job market, education for citizenship (EFC) is concerned with the development of independent thinkers who can intelligently question prevailing norms and values. (*Home education is doing both.*) Whereas education for economic survival is limited to those skills, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours required to function productively in society, EFC seeks to promote the concepts, capabilities and knowledge required for testing truth claims and justifying belief. (*Dr Codd clearly states that today's schools are in the business of imparting beliefs, attitudes and behaviours...exactly why many of us left! But he would instead cast students into a sea of relativism by testing truth claims...for crying out loud, doesn't modern man KNOW anything he can pass on to children with total confidence?!*) Whereas current education policies emphasise values that serve the needs of the current economic order (e.g. competition and consumer choice) EFC emphasises the values of social and economic justice. (*This is not neutral. It is the old-fashioned Labour Party political doctrine of socialism.*) Whereas the goals of education for economic management are largely unquestioned and taken-for-granted, the goals of EFC are matters for open enquiry. (*Since nobody KNOWS anything for sure any more, we encourage everyone to keep asking questions to clarify where we're going. Being DIYers home educators already know where they want to be going.*)