

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 31

September 1999

Minister Reveals the Shape of Things to Come

The Hon Dr Nick Smith, Minister of Education, delivered a speech spiced with signals of possible things to come on Wednesday 22 September. Speaking to the 116th annual meeting of the NZEI Te Riu Roa (teachers' union), Dr Smith talked of S.P.I.C.E.: Standards, Pride, Innovation, Choice and Excellence; then "dismayed" the 400 teachers present by announcing that compulsory national testing will go ahead as a pilot next year.

The Minister prefaced his remarks by pointing out how important he sees his MoE portfolio: "Education policy cannot stand in isolation. It is at the core of good social policy and it is at the core of good economic policy." So whether we like it or not, Government policy toward home educators is formed via some reference to the social policy and economics gurus of the day.

Things Dr Smith signalled as part of his future planning that would be of interest and/or concern to home educators under each of these headings would include:

Standards: a commitment to an independent and strong Education Review Office; a consistent standard of education across the board; increased compensation for rural schools.

Pride: commitment to Tomorrow's Schools.

Innovation: "The current Education Act...is far too prescriptive and constrains schools to a 'one size fits all' approach."

Choice: "Choice helps drive excellence." Aversion to telling parents which school to send their children to.

Excellence: schools must have an environment of excellence, which could mean many millions spent on property standards.

According to Dr Smith the Education budget is already around NZ\$7 Billion. It would seem the

search for excellence is already fairly expensive.

Introducing the compulsory testing, the Minister said, "Parity is a two way street. Now that primary teachers are paid the same as secondary teachers, parents should be entitled to expect quality information about how well their primary children are doing....A recent Ministry report revealed some telling facts. It showed that some teachers were fudging children's achievement and misleading parents. This is extremely serious." Therefore, among other things,

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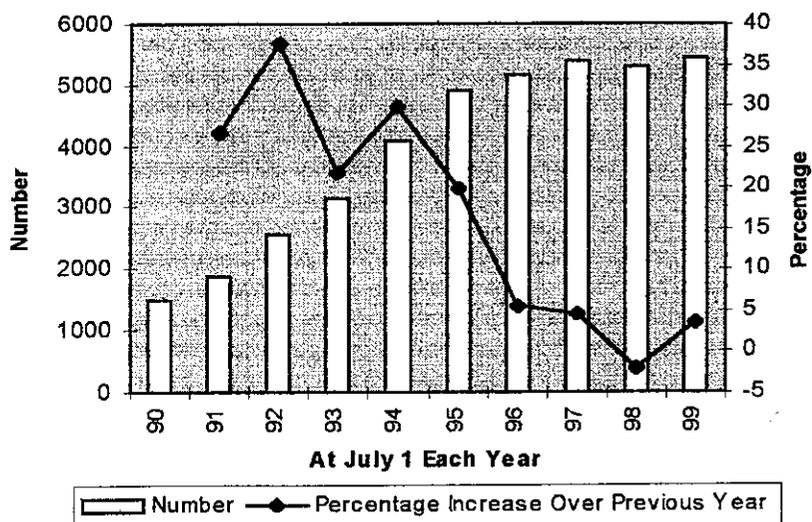
Home Educators' Numbers Increase

After an unexplained drop in total numbers last year, those home educating this year has increased to an all-time high (see Fig. 1).

Between 1 July '98 and 1 July '99 1,296 commenced home education while 1,119 finished, showing a rather large turnover for the year.

1990	=	1479	
1991	=	1873	= 26.6%
1992	=	2578	= 37.6%
1993	=	3141	= 21.8%
1994	=	4074	= 29.7%
1995	=	4882	= 19.8%
1996	=	5151	= 5.5%
1997	=	5384	= 4.5%
1998	=	5274	= -2.0%
1999	=	5451	= 3.4%

Figure 1: Home Schooled Students In NZ



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the Government plans to develop new diagnostic tools in literacy and numeracy and to pilot new national tests in literacy and numeracy for pupils in years five and seven, involving 10% of all schools next year. No mention is made as to whether home educators will be expected to sit these tests.

However, the NZEI claims the minister has been told repeatedly by parents, teachers and principals that compulsory national testing of primary students would not be in the best educational interests of children. National testing overseas has proved unpopular, expensive and of no value in raising school achievement.

What it is opposed to is simplistic, narrowly-based testing which may be used indiscriminately in the media to rank "good" and "bad" schools. Compulsory national tests focus only on aspects of numeracy and literacy. They do not cover the breadth of a child's learning nor how well the child has progressed measured against his or her own achievement in

every area. Machine-marked pen and paper test results won't provide this vital information. And according to NZEI national president Darrell Ward, "Teachers already use a variety of assessment methods as part of their teaching methods and choose those that best suit individual children. Parents need to know how they can help their own children progress."

Certainly the debate over how one would best assess a child's learning is as old as compulsory schooling, and it is warming to hear the NZEI talk of individual student needs. Most commendable. The fact that home educators exist at all is testimony to the fact that schools are not catering to individual needs. Simple logistical reality and politically correct policy also combine to make the idea a total impossibility within a compulsory, secular system. Nevertheless, Education Review Office chief executive Judith Aitken said the tests would be designed with full teacher input. And the decision to introduce such tests was welcomed by private schools.

An information pamphlet titled

"How is Your Child Really Doing at School?" is being sent to all parents of primary school children in the first week of the new term. A document which explains the new assessment policy fully, "Information for Better Learning", is also being sent out to all schools. Both will be available on the Ministry's website:

(www.minedu.govt.nz).

(Information for this article was drawn from a New Zealand Government Press Release of 22/09/99 and one from the NZEI dated 23/09/99.)

If NZ Qualifications Framework Is Confused, What Are We To Do?

For the past several years (and it looks like continuing for a few years more) home educators with teenagers have been very concerned about their children gaining some kind of recognised paper qualification. This has been such a concern to some that they actually stop home educating and send their young person back to school for that School Certificate or Bursary or whatever.

(While this may be necessary in some cases, there generally is not that big a need to follow such a route. More on this later.)

School Certificate, which actually has no meaning within the present NZ Qualifications Framework, and Bursary exams are available to home educators, but only if they can find a school willing to offer assistance, which they are not obliged to do. Sixth Form Certificate is wholly internally assessed, and so not available to home educators. Correspondence School lessons cost the earth unless the student is over 16. Even so, the current mixture of SC exam subjects, Bursary exam subjects, NZ Qualifications Framework Unit Standards and the soon-to-be-introduced Framework Achievement Standards are not just confusing....they are approaching the status of a meaningless nightmare.

The Open Polytech (which may soon merge with the Correspondence School) offers courses that may help one to be accepted into tertiary studies, and it is possible some of the many private educational institutions, tutoring services and correspondence courses out there could also give one a leg-up to tertiary study or an official "school leaving" certificate of some kind to show employers.

The confusion the NZ Qualifications Framework has caused home

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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.

All correspondence to:

The Editor, Craig S. Smith
4 Tawa St., Palmerston North 5301
New Zealand

Ph.: +64 6 357-4399 Fax: +64 6 357-4389
keystone.teach@xtra.co.nz

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

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Confused

educators (and virtually all institutional school teachers as well, just quietly) has its sequel within the NZ Qualifications Authority itself. The performance of former heads of NZQA, Dr Douglas Blackmur and Sir Neil Waters and the NZQA Board have all been investigated during 1999. The result is that the Auditor-General has declared finding "significant shortcomings".

Some new appointments have been made to the NZQA Board, and it is hoped they will be able to trim their operations into a useful, meaningful system most mortals can comprehend with relative ease. The NZQA Board is now composed of:

Dr Frank Wood, Chairman (Vice-Chancellor, Lincoln University)

David Moloney Deputy Chairman (Executive Director, Interlock)

Tony Hall (Director, the Academy Group)

Catherine Gibson (National Coordinator, Strengthening Families, Ministry of Education)

Judith Carter (Director Teacher Education, Massey University)

John Morris (Headmaster, Auckland Grammar School)

Doug Armstrong (former CEO, UNITEC Institute of Technology)

John Baker (Director Scholastic New Zealand Ltd)

Jennifer Button (Former Principal, Samuel Marsden Collegiate School)

The Home Education Foundation wishes them well in their deliberations.

But what are we home educators to do in the meantime? A fairly common piece of advice is to think outside the box....something home educators should be fairly used to doing. What does the home educated student want "a certificate" for? Have you worked that one out? You have? OK, aim for *that*, whatever it is, rather than for the "certificate".

If the young person wants to work, have him or her approach people in the industries that interest. Mum, Dad, Grandparents and other friends, neighbours and relatives can work their own networks of contacts to arrange introductions for the home educated young person.

If he or she wants to go on to tertiary study, start investigations now, well before needing to actually choose an institution and enrol. Ask the Heads of Departments for advice about what could be studied now at home to enhance prospects of passing the course. Ask admissions officers, Heads of Departments, Vice-Chancellors, lecturers and others at the institution of choice what they would like to see (when the young person comes to enrol in a year or two) in lieu of an orthodox Sixth Form Certificate or Bursary which, as a home educator, the young person is not likely to have. The NZ Universities' Vice-Chancellors' Committee and individual Vice-Chancellors have assured me again and again that each such application is assessed on its own individual merits, and that the candidate could be admitted on a Provisional Enrolment. As a Provisionally Enrolled student, if the first years' papers are passed, then the rest of that stu-

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dent's tertiary career is completely open to them.

There are, of course, some courses such as medicine, law, dentistry, etc., which are very restrictive. In such cases the home educated student may just have to get those A Bursaries...or perhaps a string of A+ grades from their first year at a tertiary institution which let the student in on Provisional Enrolment.

And start saving your money ...enrolment fees are not cheap. Or go to work and study parttime. This writer's daughter has worked full-time for three years while doing night classes and some extramural papers. When the year 2000 dawns, she will be 19, a fully qualified Legal Executive, have three years' work experience and \$20,000 in the bank. Some of her University friends will have a degree, no work experience and a \$20,000 debt. The point is, there is more than one way to skin a cat.

School Suspensions & Socialisation

A total of 3,968 students were suspended from school between April 1 and June 30 this year. That's an average of nearly 80 suspensions for each of the 50 school days in the term. It only takes the state system 17 days to boot out of their schools more students than the Ministry of Education gave exemption certificates to in all of last year!

Ministry of Education figures show that during the same quarter last year, 3,552 students were suspended....revealing an 11.7% increase this year. No matter how you slice it, things are getting bad.

A Ministry statement said the increase in students suspended showed how necessary it was to give schools a better way of dealing with student behavioural prob-

lems. But this wasn't a call to bring back the birch. No, it appears they will instead sanction a hitherto illegal practise known as "Kiwi Suspensions", where an unruly child was simply told to stay away for a while, to have some "time out", with nothing being noted on their school record.

According to Helen Sturm, Ministry Acting Operations Support Manager, new rules mean schools will now have the option of standing down a student. This allows schools to provide a warning of the need for behavioural change without going as far as suspension, the formal removal of a student from school until the board of trustees decides what to do with the student.

The greatest number of suspensions between April and June in the second quarter were for continual disobedience. These accounted for 865 suspensions or 21.8% of the total. Physical assaults on other students accounted for 801 or just over 20% of all suspensions. Drugs, including substance abuse, at 792 or just under 20% of the total, remained the third highest category. Other suspensions were for smoking, alcohol, physical assault on staff, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct as well as theft.

These are serious problems. And the ones documented in these reports are only the ones serious enough to have merited the formal suspension process. The "less serious" cases of theft, drug abuse, sexual misconduct, physical assault, etc., are not even being documented.

And we haven't even mentioned head-lice epidemics.

So why is it the first criticism people level at home educators is the lack of proper socialisation as provided in schools? Such people obviously are not reading these Ministry of Education reports.

(Facts drawn from Ministry of Education Press Release of 3/09/99)

Children Who Read Are a Dying Breed

Experts say they have anecdotal evidence that a generation of New Zealand children is growing up without the love of reading necessary to sustain a lifelong interest in the written word. Libby Limbrick, of the New Zealand Reading Association, blames it on families being "time poor". They are simply too busy to encourage their kids to read, go to the library, buy books and spend time reading with them at night. It's easier to let children put on a video, watch TV, spend time on the Internet or play Playstation. Some households have shelves full of books that are never touched.
(By Theresa Garner, NZ Herald, 25/09/99)

Before home educators get too smug about this, they need to critically analyse their own curriculum practises. Some curriculum have the child interacting with workbooks or textbooks all day. The items discussed here are "living" books, the kind one reads for pleasure: historical novels, biographies, classics, mythologies, fiction, etc., etc. As parents read these together with their children the opportunities positively abound to springboard into personal stories about family anecdotes, traditions, lessons learned in life, and so much more of the wisdom and values and attitudes parents would want to pass on to their children.

Most of us will have observed that simply reading to our children improves their vocabulary and helps them to structure their own writing.

On her recent tour around part of NZ, Diana Waring repeatedly commented on how having growing numbers of books and bookshelves was an occupational hazard for home educators. Is this true of your home? It is another of the many benefits that just come with the home schooling package. Take advantage of it.

Diana Waring Tour

Part One has come and gone. The Warings spoke to hundreds of home schoolers in Northland, Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty and many more via a Radio Rhema talkback programme.

Diana's "Beyond Survival" message encouraged so many people as it opened up for most listeners something of the vast possibilities that the home education option lays before our families. Yet so often we are just surviving, having allowed the many details and the "urgent" things to dominate our thinking. In this mode we are driven by circumstances rather than ourselves directing the circumstances toward fulfilling that original vision we had of home education.

Bill Waring's descriptions of learning styles and modalities helped many to see themselves and their children as unique individuals with various preferred ways of taking in and sifting through the data that comes our way. Understanding these things enables the home educator to more effectively plan her presentation methods, enhancing everyone's level of learning enjoyment and efficiency.

The Warings are now fully occupied with a five-month training school at the Mangere premises of Youth With a Mission (YWAM). From February 4 to 20 they plan to tour the lower North Island. Assuming their YWAM course finishes in the Auckland area, their itinerary, subject to change, could look something like this:

- 4 Feb Rotorua
contact Ros (07) 349-1450
- 5 Feb Raetihi
contact Jenny (06)385-4859
- 7 Feb New Plymouth
contact Trish (06)751-5047
- 8 Feb South Taranaki
contact Julie (06)764-6113

- 9 Feb Wanganui
contact Sharyn (06)345-8393
- 10 Feb Palmerston North
contact Megan (06) 355-2368
- 11-12 Feb Otaki camp
contact Megan (06)355-2368
- 14 Feb Napier/Hastings
contact Tracey (06)844-7590
- 15 Feb Masterton
contact Rosalind (06)378-7013
- 16 Feb Carterton
contact Christine(06)379-7229
- 17-18 Feb Wellington
contact Jocelyn (04)237-7590
- 19 Feb Wellington workshop

20 Feb Ferry to South Island

- 20 Feb Blenheim
contact Mike & Karen (03)
578-1435
- 21 Feb Cruise in Queen Charlotte Sound.
- 22 Feb Pt Ligar in Marlborough Sounds
- 3-5 March Nelson camp
contact Raewyn (03) 576-5238
- Contact for South Island:
Dot (03) 312-8790
- 5 March possibly Westport
- 6 March possibly Hokitika
- 7 March Wanaka
- 8 March Te Anau
- 9 March Te Anau-Day trip to Milford sound
- 10-11 March Invercargill
- 12-13 March Stewart Island or Gore
- 14 March Milton
- 15 March possibly round trip to Cromwell to Becks and Middlemarch to Mosgiel or Waihola.
- 16-18 March Dunedin
- 19-20 March Oamaru
- 21 March MacKenzie Country, Mt Cook
- 22 March Timaru
- 23 March Ashburton
- 24-27 March Christchurch South Island Home Educators conference
Contact: Dot (03)312-8790
- 28-29 March Leave Christchurch
Fun overnight trip to Hamner Springs
- 30 March Palmerston North
- 31 March Auckland
- 3 April leave New Zealand

Our Children Are Learning to Kill and They're Learning to Like It

That's the message from Dave Grossman, director of the Killology Research Group, of Jonesboro, Arkansas.

Colonel Grossman, an expert on the world's rising tide of personal violence, was a keynote speaker at an international defence conference at Massey University, 20-22 August 1999. He was a psychology professor at America's West Point Military Academy and is a reserve lieutenant-colonel in the US Army's Rangers Corps. Colonel Grossman's institute promotes the idea that video, movie and television media are conditioning young people into violence.

"We condition them as teens," Grossman says, "with the extreme violence of the slash and splatter movies. With a drink and popcorn, an arm around the girl/boyfriend, these movies condition young people to associate violence with pleasure."

But at the top of the risk pyramid, he says, we produce hair-triggered murderers in the video arcade, first person, one-on-one killing games. This involves games the US military have studied and then used themselves to train the killing reflex. His conclusion is that some of the kids get better at killing than the troops or the police or the FBI expect of their own professionals.

Grossman says the youngsters can and do develop skills of tactics and targeting, real killing reflexes and marksmanship performance that adults are simply not capable of producing.

Paduka, Kentucky, December 1997: the gunman was 14 and had

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never handled a real pistol until he stole one from a neighbour. But he was an avid video games player. He went to a school, and in the foyer he fired eight shots among screaming, fleeing children, with an accuracy that stunned military and police training experts. He hit eight, five in the head, three in the upper torso. The FBI reckoned at the time a trained agent facing a real life situation would hit, on average, with one shot in five.

He tells of the two boys at Columbine High, one of them seriously hooked on *Doom* -- another game the army took to itself.

"For little kids, these games are real and cause physiological arousal response like nothing else -- and the conditioning we absorb in the first five or six years of our lives cannot be undone. This violence is addictive. This violence is toxic to individuals and to society."

(Extracted from *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 21/8/99 p. 1 & 28/8/99 p. 7.)



Numbers and Proportions of NZ Home Schoolers by Regions at 1 July 1999

Figure 2 and Table 1 below both show the numbers of home educated students in each region of NZ plus what proportion of all students in that region are home educated. Table 1 also shows what proportion of home educated students live in each region. About 79% are in the North Island, 21% in the South Island.

Table 1

Region	Number	%age of all students	%age of all home educators
Northland	546	1.75	10.0
Auckland	1332	0.62	24.4
Waikato	799	1.08	14.7
Bay of Plenty	430	0.88	7.9
Gisborne	74	0.72	1.4
Hawkes Bay	189	0.62	3.5
Taranaki	172	0.78	3.2
Mnwtu-Wngnui	394	0.86	7.2
Wellington	316	0.41	5.8
Nsn-Mrlbro	317	1.40	5.8
West Coast	52	0.86	1.0
Canterbury	545	0.64	10.0
Otago	124	0.39	2.3
Southland	89	0.47	1.6
Unspecified	72	n/a	1.3
Totals	5451	(0.76)	100.0

Figure 2: Number and Proportion of Home Schoolers by Region at 1 July 1999

