

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 32

October 1999

Discussion Paper to Rewrite Education Act

The Ministry of Education released a discussion paper, "Legislation for Learning", on October first. It is "a discussion paper on making the Education Act work better for students." Introducing this paper the Hon Dr Nick Smith, Minister of Education, said, "The statutes and regulations that govern schools often stand in the way of innovation," and that any new legal framework "must keep government out of the day-to-day running of schools and reduce bureaucracy."

The paper recognises that schools are having difficulty teaching to students with an ever-widening range of abilities, diversity of backgrounds and multiplicity of educational and behavioural difficulties. It strongly affirms that education in New Zealand is a partnership between three players: the government, schools and parents. It acknowledges an increased demand for alternative forms of schooling and home-schooling. And it strongly hints at changing the entire Act to a slimmed-down version "that mainly lays down the principles on which schools must operate, leaving the details outside the Act." That is, clarifying in statute form the rights and responsibilities of all parties "in line with human rights legislation and international conventions", while leaving many administrative, procedural and perhaps even some major curriculum content decisions to be worked out at the local level.

The discussion paper does portray the government as honestly wanting to introduce more flexibility

and allow for easier establishment of alternatives while at the same time strengthening its partnership position via funding, reporting requirements and revamping the good old school charters. It seems the government feels it was somewhat side-lined by the charters. They have mostly been filed away while schools and their boards developed another set of working documents to set goals and keep them on track. The government

now wants back in on that level of the action.

Nine issues are outlined, and the response form is centred on these. Several could well be of interest to home educators: certainly the ones suggesting we spell out in the Act itself the actual principles of education as well as the rights and responsibilities of parents and children are issues on which home educators would want some input. It seems there is also plenty of opportunity to address issues such as funding, establishing partnerships with schools, part-time en-

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Government Sees Information as Key to Better Learning

The MoE's recently released document "Information for Better Learning" describes the present government's policy for improving the learning that takes place in the state's primary schools. As the title suggests, the emphasis is on gathering, analysing and disseminating information. Swept up information systems in these areas will hopefully successfully guide future planning, tracking and intervention in schools as well as keep parents more accurately informed as to how their children's learning is progressing. It sounds as if there is going to be a lot of activity by teachers, on top of all else they are already expected to do.

The document declares, "Information is the basic resource needed before we can lift children's skills in crucial areas like reading, writing and mathematics." Specifically the initiatives proposed, which include external objective testing as opposed to internal subjective assessment, are designed to meet "the Government's goal of having, by 2005, every child turning 9 able to read, write and do maths for

success." That is, the government wants to make sure that all new entrants (five-year-olds) in 2001 will possess basic literacy skills, The Three Rs, by the time they hit nine years of age in 2005.

These are worthy objectives to be sure, and apparently quite necessary considering the clear implication that too many youngsters presently in the system are not gaining possession of these basic literacy skills. However, the document goes on to affirm the seven essential learning areas of the NZ Curriculum: Language & Languages; Mathematics; Science; Technology; Social Studies; the Arts; and Health & Physical Wellbeing. The Three Rs are covered in only two of these areas, and there is no hint of cutting back in the other areas in order to concentrate on "the basics". Clearly the hoped-for improvements are meant to come from the improved quality and quantity of information the planned initiatives should supply.

Information gathering is followed by analysis, discussion papers, feedback, consultations, pilots, further analysis and consultations, and implementation. It is a

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Rewrite

rolments, etc., within the parameters of the discussion document.

The government is organising discussion forums throughout the country as well as inviting written responses to this discussion paper. It plans to introduce legislation into Parliament late in 2000....of course, this is assuming the present government is still in office at that time. To get your copy of "Legislation for Learning" or find out about the forums, contact:

Ministry of Education
Private Bag 1666
Wellington

Ph.: (04) 473-5544
Fax: (04) 473-6539
Email: lfl@minedu.govt.nz

or website:

www.minedu.govt.nz/schools/lfl

Responses to the paper need to be with the MoE by 22 December 1999, so you need to move quickly. Contact the MoE today.

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Information

hugely expensive and time consuming exercise. By the time some initiatives are actually implemented, the problems for which they were designed have changed beyond recognition or moved on to be replaced by a whole new set of problems. At the end it still provides an educational system aimed at an "average" student. Meanwhile the home education parent assesses each of her children's progress on a daily basis and in a much wider range of environmental and social contexts than is available to classroom teachers. The tutoring/mentoring aspects of home education allow parent/teachers to hand-craft unique individuals since they can and do adjust the curriculum scope, sequence, content and delivery mode within moments if need be. A more formal outline of this process may run like this:

Information is gathered during the day; analysis, discussion and feedback take place over tea; consultation with other home education experts happens on the phone that evening; and a pilot programme is in place the next day.

Home educating parents often are not aware of just how efficient and responsive their educational enterprises really are.

The government is hoping to see a number of improvements and new developments in the area of assessment tools to be used by teachers as a result of these initiatives. Since they will be much more objective in nature, it may be possible that some of these assessment tools will be useful to home educators. (Access, however, is another issue!)

Letter



NZF's CMT

It is the silly season again, no not Christmas but General Election time again and the promises of sweeteners are already being proffered to us to entice votes for the promiser(s). In this case, as reported in this afternoon's radio news, the latest policy release from NZ (Winston) First is as follows: that all young men at 18yrs or upon leaving school will go to a COMPULSORY boot camp of 12 weeks duration (young women can volunteer) to do training and compulsory community service. This is because NZ 1st sees these young men as a social problem; unemployed, at a loose end, loutish, committing crime, filling prisons, strain on social services, etc. NZ 1st's conjecture is that they need training and discipline and to do something useful for their communities. And it will save money; less dole, prison time, social services, police and court time and resources.

Has Winston 1st been listening to his educationalist siblings with their tales of the inability of the system to turn out disciplined, respectable and employable youth? And in case you missed it, the invitation will be to all young men. The word is that it will be COMPULSORY as it will be the Law of the Land. Refusal will earn some time in one of HM Prisons. This policy is brought to you by the party that had us turn out to reject Winston 1st's COMPULSORY Super scheme by over 90%. Does this policy appeal to you that our sons, whom we are to raise in a godly manner without the benefit of mass educational socialisation, could have it thrust upon them by this means? If this attempt at mass socialisation ever gets past being popularist political policy, the effect will be to lower the morals among young men to the lowest common denominator. Will we give them our votes (and remember we have two votes).

This policy is brought to you by the party that brought us ERO reviews and if they had their way, ERO home inspections. This is another way to remove our freedoms. Spread the word to other home schoolers. When we vote we must consider the parties' policies towards us and towards the freedoms we enjoy in our country.

David & Sharon Wilson
Wainuiomata

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.

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

Trading Post



Wanted:

All Saxon Maths books except 54 and 65.

Contact:

Helen Burgess
Ph. (03) 544-0477

For Sale:

Diana Waring Tapes- "What in the World's Going on Here" (Vol 2). Hot off the shelf, surplus to requirements.....\$40

Contact:

Pauline Downing
Ph.: (07) 888-2920
Fax: (07) 888-2698
Email: toeknee@xtra.co.nz

For Sale:

Konos Curriculum & Teachers Compass.....\$130

Contact:

Debbie
Ph.: (07) 345-5671
Rotorua

Wanted:

Saxon Algebra 1

For Sale:

English for the Thoughtful Child, Greenleaf Press.....\$25

Contact:

Michele Moore
Ph. (03) 355-9876
Christchurch

Wanted:

"Learning Language Arts Through Literature", Red Book and Yellow Book.
"Natural Speller"

Contact:

Sue
Ph. (06) 344-3349
Wanganui

Cheaper Software

On Monday 13 September 1999, Gitisha Parhbu of Microsoft (GitishaP@MSS.CO.NZ) said, "yes, home schooling qualifies for educational pricing" meaning with your exemption certificate, you get the same discounts on certain software as do schools.

Preschool, Nursing Home in Merger

Not long ago, in the Dutch town of Leeuwarden, a preschool centre urgently needed to expand. So it rented a room in a nursing home for about 75 elderly persons with mild senility. To the surprise of the organisers, the combination worked astonishingly well.

The children and the old people listened to story-telling and did clay-modelling and drawing together. The patients became livelier and less self-centred. They spent less time sitting down because they were helping the children learn. And the children became better adjusted to adult company and received more attention from adults.

After a year, when both institutions had funds available for building, they chose to merge. The director of the nursing home told local newspapers: "The patients are a good match for the children. Before, drawing seemed childish, but now they help the little ones and are quite busy. They have broken out of their isolation and we have opened up the world to them. Both groups behave beautifully. Some parents bring their children here to learn how to get on with the elderly. I am sure that when these children are older, they will be readier to help older people."

(From Family Education Network, *Educating & Informing, Issue 10*, 1996, PO Box 26-142, Auckland.)

Look Ahead

Thomas Watson Jr Chairman of the Board of IBM anticipated in 1945 that there would be a worldwide demand for five rather large computers. Charles Deal, Head of the US Patent Office, declared in 1899 that the patent office should be closed because everything that could be invented had been invented. (The airplane was invented within 10 years.) In 1927 the Head of Warner Brothers asked: "Who in the world would want to hear actors talk?"

Phonics Conspiracy

by Phyllis Schlafly

A textbook currently used in a state university in New York to teach aspiring teachers, "Reading Process and Practice, From Socio-Psycholinguistics to Whole Language" by Constance Weaver (1994), includes a chapter warning teachers against a "Far Right" conspiracy of "laypersons" to teach phonics.

The phonics-advocating Far Righters are out "to promote a religious agenda", so that children will get all the words "right" and thereby be able to read all the words in the Bible instead of guessing at some of them. It is a plot to keep children "from reading or thinking for themselves." It appears not to have occurred to the textbook author that, if children are such good readers that they can read all those big words in the Bible, they will have the ability to read the classics of Western civilization, too.

Undeterred by common sense, the textbook alleges that another, even more devious, motive of Far Right phonics advocates is to promote "docility and obedience on the part of the lower classes," and thereby preserve "socioeconomic stratification."

The fact is that nothing, nothing at all, has done more to prevent the "lower classes" from rising above their "socioeconomic stratification" than the failure to teach them how to read. Illiteracy is the systemic disease of the unemployed, the welfare class, and the prison population, all those pathetic thousands of Americans who, despite having attended public schools, are unable to write their own name.

Scrap the failed method called Whole Language, I say, and teach children how to read by the proven phonics method. But the teachers won't: they believe that phonics is a Far Right religious and political conspiracy. How sad.

Diagnostic Quiz

To help parents determine the type of education that best suits them and their children:

State School Private School Home School

This quiz is designed to be taken with one primary-aged child in mind.
(All children are unique...take another quiz with another child in mind.)

1. It is important that my child receives excellent academic training.
a -- very b -- somewhat c -- not really
2. It is important that I do not "lose" my child through a communication barrier, spiritually, or because of a "generation gap".
a -- very b -- somewhat c -- not really
3. My child does noticeably better when given more personal one-to-one instruction.
a -- definitely b -- somewhat c -- not really
4. The primary responsibility for the academic education of my child belongs to:
a -- me and my family b -- private enterprise c -- state schools
5. The primary responsibility for the social training (all around socialisation, including character and spiritual training) of my child belongs to:
a -- me and my family b -- society in general c -- state schools
6. My child is easily influenced by peers.
a -- very b -- somewhat c -- not really
7. I find myself teaching my child things during the course of natural conversation and everyday events (i.e., while shopping, taking a walk, doing the garden, driving, etc.)
a -- often b -- sometimes c -- never
8. It is important that my child's curriculum be based on beliefs, standards, values and attitudes that I mostly agree with.
a -- very b -- somewhat c -- not really
9. If I was tutoring just my own child at home, I could probably do as well as the average trained teacher with 25 children of mixed abilities and backgrounds in a classroom.
a -- probably could b -- not sure c -- no way

Scoring:

Number of As = x 3 = _____
Number of Bs = x 2 = _____
Number of Cs = x 1 = _____

Total = _____

24 to 27: you should definitely be home schooling!

20 to 26: you should investigate the home schooling option.

14 to 19: Private or integrated schools may suit you best.

Below 14: You would probably be most comfortable with state schools.

Home Education Awareness Week

The Manawatu Home Educators manned a booth in the Plaza Shopping Centre in Palmerston North on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 11-13 October. They did not stay Thursday through Saturday as they had found in the past that people were too busy to stop for a chat. Although there were far fewer people earlier in the week, they had a far larger number of meaningful conversations.

The Diagnostic Quiz to the left was used for the first time to great advantage, as it focussed people on to several issues in a very short period of time, sparking good conversations. In the past people would respond to the idea of home education that they simply couldn't do it. But having taken this quiz, people now saw they needed to seriously think about it, especially since all but 1 of the 49 quiz takers had scores of 22 or above (and that 1 didn't answer all the questions)! Most people were immediately struck by one or two of the issues presented in the quiz and then made the connection: that by their own judgment, home education is a serious option which holds

to principles and values parallel to their own.

A number line from 27 down to 5 was on the wall at the back. Whenever anyone's quiz was scored, it was written on a red peel-and-stick dot and placed on the appropriate area of the numberline. Participants saw that their opinions were definitely being recorded.....for all to see, no less! At a glance, anyone could see that virtually everyone scored toward the high end, meaning the general population, without consciously knowing it, agrees with the core values of home education! Well, this is not the only way to interpret the data, but it served to harness the peer pressure of numbers to the home education cause!

Of course, this is not an authoritative diagnosis, but merely a tool for prompting discussions. (A disclaimer was printed at the bottom of each A5 sheet reading, "Disclaimer: Quiz results are not to be construed as legal or professional advice.") Wilberforce used just such a conversation-starter 200 years ago in England to help turn public opinion against the institution of slavery. Perhaps home educators will eventually convince NZers that, as studies have shown, an average family is better than a good institution.

Of the 49 responses, the results were as follows:			Scores:
1a = 43	1b = 6	1c = 0	27 = 10
2a = 47	2b = 2	2c = 0	26 = 7
3a = 39	3b = 8	3c = 2	25 = 18
4a = 43	4b = 1	4c = 3	24 = 5
5a = 46	5b = 1	5c = 0	23 = 6
6a = 18	6b = 23	6c = 7	22 = 2
7a = 37	7b = 11	7c = 0	18 = 1
8a = 42	8b = 6	8c = 1	
9a = 36	9b = 10	9c = 1	