

# TEACH Bulletin

## Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 38

May 2000

### Ministry Explains Exemption Questions

Anita Holtslag, Secretary of Wellington Home School Association, and the Editor of *TEACH Bulletin* met with five members of the Lower Hutt Management Office of the Ministry of Education for over an hour on Thursday 18 May. They were friendly, approachable, reasonable and professional.

We had a number of issues to raise with them, the most prickly of which both had to do with measures taken by the MoE to be "satisfied" that exempted children would be taught at least as regularly and well as in a registered school.

One measure we are all familiar with is the amount of detail requested in the exemption application. Has there been a tightening up of the exemption criteria? The Lower Hutt office said they are endeavouring to be more consistent. When one hears stories that exemptions can be gained in a day over the phone or by simply sending in copies of a previously successful exemption with a copy of a previous positive ERO report on the one hand, and on the other hand that it takes repeated requests for more detailed timetables, then one sees the issue as not only consistency but also fairness to all.

The "timetable" the Lower Hutt office is happy to accept is anything that clearly indicates the child will be occupied in educational activities and/or experiences in both the morning and the afternoon. It appears most home educators don't have enough time in a day to do all they would like, so describing a typical day is more a matter of

what NOT to include. Some unschoolers and child-directed purists might philosophically resist pre-programming any block of time, and this makes it difficult for them to consider a timetable at all. The MoE made it clear they did not expect a grid with subjects listed on one axis and the hours listed on the other for the applicant whose approach precluded such a thing. However, for the applicant whose stated curriculum apparently lends itself to a grid-type timetable, the MoE felt asking for such would not be a burden. Indeed, of the 20 to 30 applications this one office receives each week, they stated

about 80% were approved first time with no problem at all.

It is a similar situation surrounding the essential learning areas suggested by the MoE in the National Curriculum Guidelines. The headings of "Art" and "Technology" may cause some uncertainty for parents at first, but the MoE officers with whom we spoke made it clear that these areas of learning are exceedingly broad, specified no one thing in particular, nor how the material was to be covered. That is, the MoE wants the prospective home educators to demonstrate that whatever they are doing, there will be some "Art" appreciation, "Art" being defined by the home educator according to their own curriculum vision, and their curriculum vision also guiding

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Working Mums Disadvantage Children

An extensive survey of child development suggests that children's educational achievement can be significantly held back if their mothers work.

The findings, based on a survey of over 4,000 American children, will fuel the debate about the balance between parents' careers and family responsibilities, and the government's role in encouraging women into work.

In a paper published by the non-partisan National Bureau of Economic Research, Christopher Ruhm, an economist at the University of North Carolina, says that 3 and 4 year-olds tend to have lower verbal ability if their mothers worked during the child's first year, although they have slightly higher ability if their mothers worked when they were 2

and 3. Five and 6 year-olds tend to have worse reading and maths skills if their mothers worked during any of the child's first three years.

Earlier studies, both in the US and elsewhere, have found that working mothers had little effect on child development. But Mr Ruhm says these have generally used smaller samples and controlled for fewer factors such as the parent's education and family size.

The effect of fathers working is less clear-cut, possibly because most fathers who are not working are unemployed rather than choosing to spend time with their children. But the involvement of fathers in bringing up young children also appears to be important. (by Ed Crooks, Economics Editor, Financial Times, May 15 2000)

(Continued from page 1)

how “Art” is presented: as a separate subject, in the wider context of other things, or as a regular incidental. If the parents say they will definitely NOT have any “Art” component (no photos, no crayons, no play dough, no pencil & paper) they need to be prepared to articulate clearly why they would say that.

The MoE made it clear that they were not in the business of blocking or limiting the granting of exemptions. They seemed well aware of the many curriculum visions home educators have, and made it clear that they were not in the business of passing judgment on the curriculum itself, but on whether the applicant was conversant with the curriculum. They felt that since an exemption granted for a six-year-old would be valid until the child turned 16, whether or not the parent planned to home educate that long, it would be reasonable to expect the parent/applicant to be able to articulate clearly where they hope to go and how they plan to get there.

Prospective home educators could well speed up their exemption

applications by visiting the MoE office in person, as face to face interviews communicate so much more effectively than typed words on paper. The Lower Hutt office welcomed the idea. Prospective home educators do great damage to their cases by submitting hastily-done applications, those poorly presented in both appearance and organisation, and applications which are word-for-word the same as someone else’s with only the names changed.

Another measure open to the MoE for ensuring they are “satisfied” with an exemption is indicated in the words on the exemption application itself stating that the MoE may check with the child’s school principal or Public Health Nurse. These words are not new: they have been on application forms since at least 1996. The words indicate the kind of concern which they may have...neglect or abuse....a concern which may be triggered by something in the application or prior knowledge of the applicants. Should someone, a principal or relative, choose to tell the MoE something about a prospective home schooling family, the MoE may feel

obliged to follow it up. The officers with whom Anita and I met said it was a rare event to consult with anyone beyond the parents in an exemption application..... none of the ones present could remember having done so more than once.

A letter one home educator had received explained that more information was needed to “satisfy audit requirements to which the MoE is subject.” The Lower Hutt office was not happy that such wording had been used in a letter to a home educator (and neither was the Ministry’s Head

Office when I brought it up with them). Audit NZ periodically reviews all the documentation involved in batches of exemption applications to ensure they are fulfilling their statutory obligations. The MoE’s processing of exemption applications is to ensure we are fulfilling our statutory obligations: to satisfy the MoE that the child “will be taught at least as regularly and well as in a registered school”.

### Ministry of Education Wellington

That same afternoon I proceeded on my own to the Head Offices of the MoE to meet with Derek Miller and Jim Matheson for an hour. Mr Miller has been dealing with home educators at the national level for many years, but is soon to take on other duties, leaving Mr Matheson in charge for the time being.

They said the MoE will continue to resist the insistence from some quarters that exemption applications routinely include contact with the current school principal...the judgment is to be on the application unless something else raises a concern. An issue raised about the last-minute nature in which exemptions for six-year-olds are issued was taken to heart, and a remedy will be sought. The computer system used apparently doesn’t allow for the post dating of documents at this stage.

We talked of 1) access to Correspondence School, 2) Supervisory Allowance for five-year-olds, and 3) support group meetings being considered as schools. The standard party line hasn’t changed on the first two issues.

1) Apparently Wyatt Creech got quite a number of letters from home schoolers regarding the Correspondence School, and it was put on the list of policy options which got canned by the present government. Since the Correspondence School is seen by the government as a school of last

(Continued on page 3)

## 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

# Trading Post



## For Sale:

### GENERAL

The SAT & College Preparation Course for the Christian Student by James Stobaugh as new.....\$ 30

"The Homeschooling Father" by Michael P. Farris, new.....\$10

### LATIN

Latin Grammar (second edition) by Douglas Wilson and Karen Craig.....\$ 10

Latin Grammar Answer Key (second edition) by Douglas Wilson and Karen Craig.....\$5

Latin Made Simple by Rhoda Hendricks, revised by Lisa Padol, as new.....\$ 20

### GEOGRAPHY

New Zealand: A New Geography by Peter Dent & Fiona McEwan (suitable for Form 3-4).....\$ 5

### SCIENCE

I also have a selection of New Zealand Year 11 (School Certificate) science textbooks available for sale. Contact me if you are interested.

### READING

A Beka Reader 4-4 "Enchanted Isles" (3rd edition).....\$ 5

A Beka Reader 6-1 "Adventure Lands" (1986 edition).....\$ 5

### MATHEMATICS

National Curriculum Mathematics Level 5 Book 1 by Catley and Tipler, as new.....\$ 20

## Contact:

Phillipa Williams  
27 Taranaki Street  
MASTERTON  
phone (06) 378-7345  
kellyw@ihug.co.nz

(Continued from page 2)

resort (i.e., extenuating circumstances cause you to need its services) or of a second chance in the case of adults, to make it free to home educators and all the others who would like free access would constitute a radical shift in its *raison d'être*, not an easy move for any government agency. 2) The Supervisory Allowance to five year olds idea was seen as

opening a Pandora's Box of other related issues: allowances to parents who engage in Early Childhood Education with their preschoolers but who choose not to use the local Kindy, Play Centre, Montessori, etc. 3) Mr Miller has written an article on what constitutes a home school which is reproduced elsewhere in this *TEACH Bulletin*.

Mr Matheson said of the complaints people have, the fear and rumours being circulated among home schoolers: "The bureaucracy could be cut in half if people rang us first". (I remember Jenny Clark, the ERO's public relations officer, expressing similar sentiments.) There are situations when the exemption has been held up, or parents feel their child is in danger at school or supremely unhappy, yet not to be at school could be seen as breaking the law....Mr Matheson said they are always amenable to a phone call explaining the situation.



## Rob Williamson of the ERO

The *TEACH Bulletin* Editor met with Rob Williamson, Home School Unit Manager for the ERO, when he called by on Wednesday 24 May. Talk about relaxed and friendly! Our conversation went for two hours and flowed across many issues.

The ERO gets a hold of every New Zealand produced home education magazine and newsletter it can. Mr Williamson reads most of them. He also reads every single approved exemption application and then sorts and classifies them according to various criteria. He is the only Review Officer doing home educators full time, but dispelled the idea that some Review Officers do a school in the morning and then visit a home educator in the afternoon. Their desire, he said, is to focus on one task, and schools were a very different task than an exempted student at home.

What about a home educator who changes from what she originally

wrote in her exemption application? No problem: just ensure you can adequately explain your present curriculum vision and can demonstrate you are presently following this vision. The terms "as regularly and well" are understood by the ERO, as by the MoE, in very broad terms.

Why do the children have to be present? Both the MoE and the ERO have come across situations most of us wouldn't dream of: children who don't exist and those back at school but for whom the parents are still collecting the Supervisory Allowance. It is very important to Mr Williamson that it be ascertained what the home educated child is doing and that he or she is happy in that.

Is the ERO engaged in a "Fishing Expedition" when ERO officers go into a private home to conduct a review: are they on the lookout for other evidence that might cause them to report to Social Welfare or OSH or the Fire Service? Mr Williamson explained that just as any private citizens would feel morally obligated to report majorly suspicious or unhealthy situations that came to their notice, so Review Officers are similarly obligated should something of that nature come before their eyes.

Just as with the MoE, Mr Williamson said that if a home educator ever had a difficulty or complaint with the ERO, please contact him straight away, for he is only too eager to have all parties seeing eye to eye as much as is possible.

## Review of Special Education 2000 Policy

Dr Cathy Wylie has been  appointed by Government to do this Review, and is calling for submissions to reach her by 16 June. For further information: NZ Council for Educational Research, Box 3237, Wellington, or Johanne McComish, ph. (04) 802-1443 or [special@nzcer.org.nz](mailto:special@nzcer.org.nz)



# Is It a School?

by Derek Miller, MoE

The meaning of the word “school” has never been legally defined. Nevertheless, it is the Ministry’s view, based on legal advice, that the existence of a school is not related to the number of students who attend, but to the quality, nature and regularity of the teaching.

There is a certain amount of myth surrounding the supposedly magic figure of 8 as the maximum number of students who can be schooled together without falling foul of the penalty set out in Section 35A(12) for running an unregistered school. Some people have tried to get around what they understand to be the “magic” figure by saying that they have two quite separate groups of 8 children which just fortuitously happen to be educated on the same property.

The fact is that the lower limit of 9 students is merely one of the criteria set out in Section 35A(1) (b) to help determine whether a private school (or a proposed private school) is efficient. Note also that the word “usually” is used in association with the figure 9. The truth is, of course, that schools can and do exist with fewer than 9 students. The Ministry is quite possibly resourcing one or two in your area.

When we find a group of homeschooled students meeting together, the furthest we can go on the “number” issue is to say that the group may be in breach of the Education Act if there are more than 9 students in the group. The real question to ask, however, is: “Does the group operate as a school?”

To answer this question we should be concentrating on the nature of the programme which operates when the group is in session. When this issue has arisen previously we have found it useful to ask the question “Is this a structured educational situation?” ie “are several children being

instructed or guided by a teacher on a regular basis?”

If the answer is “yes” then it is simply a confirmatory piece of evidence if the number of the group is 9 or more.

Using this approach you may well feel that a de facto school is operating when you find a group of 7 students from 5 different families being taught together several days a week at a specified location by a single adult whose aim is to deliver an ongoing educational programme, using planned lesson material. In such a situation it would be no defence to argue that all the children attending hold certificates of exemption granted under Section 21 of the Education Act 1989. (See section 35A(2).)

On the other hand you may feel that there is no de facto school when you find an indeterminate group of homeschooling parents who meet three mornings a week in the local church hall to provide mutual support to each other as they deliver educational programmes to their children who may number 12-15 at any one time. You would also probably feel that a Sunday School with a roll of 100 students does not constitute a school because it is in session for only one hour a week and its focus is very restricted in scope.

The Ministry has encountered one occasion when the parents of a large, adopted family progressively sought exemptions under Section 21 to enable them to homeschool all their nine children. We felt that there was no breach of Section 35A on this occasion. We believe that such a situation is still consistent with the spirit of Section 21 of the Education Act 1989, which gives parents the right to seek certificates of exemption if they wish to take responsibility for the education of their own children.

On other occasions, however, when the Ministry has become aware of groups which may be operating in breach of Section 35A of the Education Act, it has taken action to regularise the

situation. In cases where the group is reasonably large, the Ministry has insisted that those in charge immediately seek provisional registration as a school or cease operation immediately. In the case of small groups the Ministry has advised that the emphasis should be on individual instruction rather than group education.

## Quality Time is Quantity Time



Time — not necessarily quality time — spent with teenage children was hugely important in avoiding crises that could lead to suicide, says Ken Mellor and his wife Elizabeth who have been working as parent counsellors and psycho therapists in Australia and New Zealand for 30 years. They believed parenting styles had affected the climbing suicide rate among New Zealand teenagers.

Mr Mellor said although teenage crises were not new, many parents were now “leaving their kids to themselves a great deal more than they used to. Because of that they are not learning the ways of handling themselves that they do through interaction with their parents.” He said “quality time” with children often did not achieve the benefits it was once thought to achieve.

“What we are now discovering is that actual time is more important than quality time, so the longer we spend with our kids the better they are likely to turn out, rather than spending short time with them that is high quality. They need the day-by-day involvement. This is not to say quality time is not important, but if you have lousy quality for a lot of the time, that is not good. Even mediocre and sometimes really boring time when you are just hanging out with each other is really important, because kids are learning all sorts of lessons from that which they can’t learn from quick snatches of quality time.

(Excerpted from *Wanganui Chronicle*, 22/3/00, p.7)



# Diana Waring Tour, II

Part I has come and gone. Part II is partly over. The Waring spoke to hundreds of home schoolers in Northland, Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty and many more via a Radio Rhema talkback programme last September. They have since visited home educators in Rotorua, Raetihi, Stratford, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Otaki, Hastings, Masterton and Porirua. See them when they are near you!

## **Tentative Timetable: this will change slightly**

22 Feb Port Ligar in Marlborough Sounds

### **3 March Top of the South Christian Home Educators' Seminar, Bridge Valley Christian Ranch, Wakefield**

contact Raewyn (03)576-5238  
email shand@ts.co.nz  
10am - Beyond Survival - Diana  
11:30am - Teen Panel - what happens when your children get beyond primary school?  
12:30pm Lunch - Bring your own please

1:30pm "Different Strokes for Different Folks" - Bill & Diana. Please make arrangements for the care of your children during these sessions so we can all take advantage of hearing these messages without interruption.

### **3-5 March 2000 Nelson Camp**

contact Raewyn (03)576-5238  
email shand@ts.co.nz  
Bridge Valley Christian Ranch, Wakefield. Those folk who are attending both seminar and camp are welcome to bring their own Friday night BBQ tea and cook it at camp.

3 March (Friday) 7pm Registration and Introductions

Supper and bedtime for younger children. Parents - "History via the Scenic Route" - Diana. Older children - Youth cafe.

4 March am - Dads & children -

come prepared to make yourselves simple costumes of a person in history of your choice. Mums - fireside chat time with Diana pm - Family Top Town Events: enjoy fun, fellowship and exercise together

Saturday night - Fashion Parade through History by Dads & children while Mums watch.

After Supper: bedtime for younger children. Parents - around the fire-side with Bill & Diana. Older children - "night activities".

5 March - Bill & Diana "Box Free Living" and "Things We Wish We

Had Known Before"  
Children's Programme

Lunch, cleanup and farewells.

### **Contact for rest of South Island:**

Dot (03)312-8790  
i.brown@ext.canterbury.ac.nz

5 March Westport

contact Cathy (03)789-6592

kotare.dunes@xtra.co.nz

Casual evening meeting

6 March Hokitika

contact Lloyd & Sonja

(03)755-5300

Casual evening meeting

7 March Wanaka

Contact Dave & Fay ph/fax (03)

443-7170. Early morning meeting on the 8th.

8 March Te Anau

contact Nancy (03)249-8166

email nbarnes@teanau.co.nz

9 March Te Anau-Day trip to

Milford sound and boat cruise

out to ocean.

Casual evening meeting

### **10-11 Mar Invercargill Conference**

Contact Gay Gibson

ph. (03)214-4493

Venue:

Invercargill Christian Centre

165 Leet St., Invercargill

9:00am - Registration

9:30 - Different Strokes for Different Folks - Bill Waring

10:30am - Questions

11:00am - Morning Tea

11:15am - Panel: What We Wish We'd Known

12 noon - Lunch

1:00 - Beyond Survival - Diana W

2 - 2:30pm - Questions

2:30-3pm - Parent & Teen Panel

3:00pm - Afternoon Tea

3:15pm - The Hilarious Home School

12-14 Mar Stewart Is. and/or Gore

15-16 March Dunedin

contact Erna (03)489-4026

email vans@xtra.co.nz

### **17-18 March Dunedin Conference**

9:00am (Friday) Registration

9:15-10:30 "Beyond Survival"

10:30-11:00 Questions

11:00-11:30 Morning Tea

11:30-12:30 "The Hilarious Home School"

12:30-1:00 Questions

1:00-2:00 Lunch

2:00-3:00 Panel of parents (Diana,

Barbara, Maureen, Dot) to answer questions from new home schoolers or families considering home

schooling, eg, filling in forms, MoE requirements, ERO Re-

views, curriculum, etc. A break to give families time to

collect children, go home, have

tea and return for evening session.

7:30-8:30pm Panels: Mum's SOS;

Dads to the Rescue; Teenagers

8:30pm Feast for Fathers, a deli-

cious supper combined with some

music & skits.

18 March

9:00am Registration

9:15-10:30 "History via the Scenic Route."

10:30-11:00 Questions

11:00-11:30 Morning Tea

11:30-12:30 "Different Strokes for Different Folks"

12:30-1:00pm Questions

1:00-2:00 Lunch

2:00-3:30 Panel: Home schooling through high school

3:30-4:00 Afternoon Tea

4:00-5:30 Panel: "The Things We Wish We Had Known Before"

19 March A day for the Waring on their own in Palmerston

20 March Oamaru

contact Wendy (03)434-9107

Fireside chat

21 March MacKenzie Country

contact

craig.barbara.smith@xtra.co.nz

22 March Timaru

contact Ross and Hilary

(03)688-3604

ross@waughconsult.co.nz or

Annette (03)688-5494

Casual evening meeting

23 March Ashburton

Contact Cheryl (03)308-2606

Casual evening meeting

24 March Christchurch

pot luck lunch and afternoon mark

the inaugural AGM of the **National Council of Home Educators, NZ**; contact Peter: (07) 825-9914; ixoye@ihug.co.nz

Venue: Christophers Anglican

Church, 244 Avonhead Rd., Chch.

### **24-27 March Christchurch - South Island Home Educators Conference**

contact Dot (03)312-8790

i.brown@ext.canterbury.ac.nz

Venue: Christophers Anglican Church, 244 Avonhead Rd., Chch.

Fri 24 March

5:00pm Pizza & Chips

6:30pm late registration

7:00pm "Beyond Survival"

Sat 25 March

9:00am late registration

9:15am "Different Strokes"

11:00am Morning Tea

11:30am "History via S.R."

1:00pm Lunch break

2:00pm Panels: Dads to the Res-

cue and Mums Share Our Secrets

3:30pm Afternoon tea

4:00pm "Ancient Civilizations

and the Bible"

5:30pm BBQ

7:00pm Young People's Panel:

Home Ed. through High School

26 March Sunday

27 March

5th Annual **TEACH Forum**, start

ing with continental breakfast and ending with BYO lunch, contact

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

(06) 357-4399

craig.barbara.smith@xtra.co.nz

For all those involved in coordinating or wanting to start support groups, newsletters etc.

Venue: Christophers Anglican Church, 244 Avonhead Rd., Chch.

**South Island Home Educators Conference Continues**

2:00pm History

3:30pm Afternoon Tea

4:00pm Panel "The Things We Wish We Had Known Before"

5:30pm Break

7:00pm "Box Free Living" or "Hilarious Home School"

28-29 March Leave Christchurch for fun overnight trip to Hamner Springs

30 March Palmerston North stopover

31 March Auckland

contact: Dorinda (09)480-6878

email jduthie@ihug.co.nz

**1 April North Shore Workshop**

Windsor Park Baptist Church, 550 East Coast Rd., Mairangi Bay, Auckland. Last chance to hear the Waring Family before they leave NZ.

10 - 11:00am - Registration, morning tea, view wide range of resources for sale.

11-12:30pm sessions

1. Ancient Civilisations of the Bible - Diana Waring

2. Preparing for Homeschooling (0-6yrs) - Rachel Haythornethwaite & Alison Haworth

3. Taking a Child out of School - Maryanne Abplanalp

4. Homeschooling a Child with Special Needs - Kate Jaunay

5. Secondary & Tertiary Qualifications for Homeschoolers - Carol Munroe, Craig and Barbara Smith

6. Life as a Homeschooled Teenager-Discussion session featuring Isaac, Michael and Melody Waring. Moderator Bill Waring (age limit 12-20 yrs)

7. Science Teaching Resources for Scientifically & Unscientifically Minded Parents - Ros Smart and Julie Carter (Please bring a magnifying glass)

8. Teaching Reading using Phonics - Gail Able

12:30-1:30pm lunch - BYO - resources available again

1:30-3:00pm HOMESCHOOLING IN

NEW ZEALAND

- What we have seen

- What we have learned

- What are the benefits

taken by Bill, Diana, Isaac, Michael and Melody Waring.

Since the beginning of September 1999, the Waring family have been

touring throughout New Zealand speaking to a wide range of homeschooling families. Along with Craig and Barbara Smith, from the Home Education Foundation, they have gained a comprehensive perspective of homeschooling in New Zealand.

This workshop is their last speaking engagement before leaving New Zealand and returning to America.

3 April departure at the Auckland airport.

**NEW NEW NEW**

Diana Waring History Alive email discussion group

For those who are using the Waring resources. Moderated by Barbara Smith. Your questions can be directed to Diana Waring herself when necessary. To Subscribe, email:

**dwaha@xtra.co.nz**

(Continued from page 3)

**Local Conferences**

**North Shore Workshop**

Saturday

1 April 2000

Windsor Park Baptist Church

Mairangi Bay  
Auckland

**Contact:**

Dorinda (09)480-6878

jduthie@ihug.co.nz