

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 41

August 2000

Ministerial Working Party on Home Education: The Issues

Nominations by the four home education organisations invited by the MoE to make nominations (Home Education Foundation, Home Educators' Network of Aotearoa, National Council of Home Educators of NZ, and NZ Home Schooling Association) are in, and the Minister is making his choice as to who will actually be invited to join the Working Party. Because the closing date for nominations was shifted from 31 July to 21 August, it has apparently cut down on the time home educators and others will have to make submissions. The still draft-only timetable now looks like this:

Week of 4 Sept:

Call for submissions via MoE web page and notice in Education Gazette. Appointment of Working Party members.

Week of 11 Sept:

Preparation of issues paper by MoE.

Week of 9 Oct:

Closing date for submissions; analysis of submissions by MoE staff; analysis given to Working Party members.

Week of 23 Oct:

Two day working party

Week of 6 Nov:

Two day working party

Week of 13 Nov:

Draft report to WP members.

Week of 27 Nov:

Final report and submission to Minister.

There has been a steady flow of responses to the *TEACH Bulletin* Opinion Poll #5. Using these and the many points of discussion on the email discussion groups, *TEACH Bulletin* offers the following tentative and interim analysis of the issues (operating

assumptions for this analysis included the overall objectives of preserving the maximum amount of freedom for all types of home educators, with a minimum amount of accountability to and intervention by the MoE and ERO):

Supervisory Allowance

Home educators vary quite a bit on this issue, many happy to see the SA increased but not to see an increase in regulations. Virtually 100% would carry on home educating if the SA disappeared altogether.

Entitlements to Special Education

On 2 August the MoE released a

review of Special Education in New Zealand. It had some hugely significant recommendations in it, including the disestablishment of the SES (Special Education Service). Even so, given the extra level of commitment by parents home educating their own SE children, and the small numbers involved, the state would achieve its SE objectives more consistently within the home education community by giving these parents complete access to all its SE services and resources.

Qualifications

Home educators seem fairly unconcerned about access to high school qualifications, in particular the upcoming NCEA which will eventually replace School Cert., 6th Form Cert., and Bursary. Lack of such qualifications has

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State Schooling System's Sinking Situation

It is in the news so much lately, one finds it hard to ignore. June's *TEACH Bulletin* looked at the epidemics of violence, sex and drugs in schools. The March issue grappled with the confusing and still largely unknown school-leaving qualifications coming on-stream soon. Three things have hit the news in August: cannabis on campus, illiteracy among undergraduates and vandalism. While it is the many superior benefits of home education that convince us to keep our children at home, it is these constant troubles at schools which make us so thankful we made the move.

The Weed

A 12-year-old was caught selling it in a South Auckland school in little \$1 packets....he had plenty of customers among classmates. Trevor Grice, founder-director of

LIFE Education Trust, says drug use among intermediate school pupils is increasing along with the potency and related dangers of genetically modified strains of the plant. In the Wairarapa and Kapiti a survey showed that 19% of 16-year-olds are *regular* users. Apparently Tawa College principal Bruce Murray, whose school began urine testing of students *several years ago* is not exaggerating when he says, "It's a serious matter. Every school — I don't care who they are, whether they are private, integrated, State or whatever — they have kids at their schools who are involved with marijuana."

Illiteracy

We all thought the main reason for the existence of schools was to ensure children were taught to read and write. Well, it's not happening

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not been a bar to entry into tertiary institutions or the workforce.

Vocational Guidance

There seems little concern here with free information and advice on the web and phone and regular Career Fairs around the country. For home educated individuals to be able to ring the local school's vocational guidance counsellor for an appointment like anyone else would seem a minuscule request.

Access to Other Resources

Things like specialist chemistry labs, metal or woodwork shops and the Correspondence School come to mind. Access to school properties could well be a matter of local negotiations rather than MoE fiat. Access to the National Library, which home educators currently have, needs to be maintained. And it does seem reasonable for under 16s to be able to register for night classes and Polytech courses that have no prerequisites.

Professional Development

This issue incited a lot of discussion on the email loops.

Home educators are clearly NOT in favour of state-mandated PD of any kind. Simply put, there is little the average home educator could use among the materials designed for state-run compulsory and secular mass education systems. But as it is, home educators are involved in quite a range of professional development activities they source for themselves and through their many local support groups. (I network with over 80 such groups and I know there are more than this — Ed.) These groups routinely run discussions, topical evenings, half-day workshops, full-day workshops, science days, home & country shows, weekend seminars and conferences with guest speakers, even some from overseas. They publish newsletters filled with all manner of fantastic teaching tips; there are three home-grown periodicals with national circulations that I am aware of: *HENA*, *Keystone* and *TEACH Bulletin*, and the *South Islander* covers the Mainland at least. AHE of Auckland; THEN of Hamilton; Wellington, Manawatu, Canterbury and Otago have all produced outstanding newsletters

and there are many more provincial ones as well. Many support groups run their own resource libraries and stock them with all manner of books on home education. There is at least one national home education lending library that I know of which stocks examples of curriculum for people to borrow and test out before they commit themselves to spending their hard-earned money. There are several excellent web sites. There is a bewildering array of email discussion groups. And home educators purchase and import from overseas all manner of books,

resources, curriculum, magazines and journals all designed to improve their home educating skills.

Accountability Issues

With regard to the MoE: Most home educators are fairly happy with the exemption procedures and would only suggest minor adjustments. However, home educators are strongly united in their desire to see recognised in law the prior right of parents to determine the type of education their children receive.

With regard to the ERO: Having a range of review options would make a lot of home educators happy, with the writing of their own assessment reports favoured by perhaps a third of those willing to express an opinion.

Improving Educational Outcomes

This really is a problematic issue, first of all in determining what the MoE means by it. It is the kind of jargon surrounding the implementation of Unit Standards and these new Achievement Standards. It is the jargon of the OBE (outcome based education) philosophy so roundly condemned by concerned educators all across America.

Home educators are encouraged to make time to discuss these issues now, for when submissions are called for in early September, there will only be about four weeks in which to prepare them (that is according to the latest *draft* timetable received to date from the MoE). Familiarise yourself with the issues and prepare to make a submission *as an individual*, for support groups may find it hard to come to complete consensus on all these issues.

A submission can be a simple statement of your opinion without masses of documentation or supporting evidence. Comment on general principles, on each issue or only on the one about which you have the strongest convictions. But do make your convictions known! The more submissions the better.

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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instruction, and reject not your

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for a Canadian home educating
family (with four children ages 1-
8) seeking accommodation in
Northland, Waikato, Bay of
Plenty, Wellington, and the South
Island for a tour in November
2000. Will have a tent, so just
need a backyard.

Please Contact:

Conroy & Kathleen Bergen at
wladner@telusplanet.net

**We are supposed to
teach "as regular and
well as in a
registered school".
If that's all we
achieve, I'll consider
ourselves failures.**

-- Craig Mortimer
Moerewa, Northland

Coming Events

Barbara Smith of the Home Education Foundation is travelling throughout New Zealand in August with the *Above Rubies* Ministry, speaking about Home Education. Their remaining itinerary is:

CAMPS

1-3 Sept. Coopers Beach (Northland). Sharon Tan, (09) 409-2119

MEETINGS

30 Aug. Mt Maunganui meeting. Jenny, (07) 578-1904

31 Aug. 7.30pm Dargaville. Judith Middleton, (09) 439-7402

3 Sept. 7:30pm Moerewa. Craig & Jill, (09) 404-0763

(Above Rubies magazine has been reaching and strengthening families throughout the world for 23 years. Ph. (07) 575-2232, Fax (07) 575-2246
rubies@eneternet.co.nz <http://aboverubies.org>)

Whangarei - Wed 6 September: All Day Conference

Registration Forms from: Diane Brighthouse, Richards Road, R.D. 1, Kamo.

9:30-10:30 (A) Jan Bryan: Secondary School English by Unit Studies.

(B) Barbara Smith: Introduction to Home Schooling

10:30-10:50 Morning tea

10:50-12:00 C&B Smith: Maintaining the Vision and Avoiding Burnout

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00-2:00 (A) Craig Smith: Home Schooling Without a Curriculum.

(B) Judith Middleton: Science by Unit Studies.

(C) Someone may speak on Special Needs children

2:00-3:00 (A) Jan Bryan: Primary School English by Unit Studies.

(B) Craig & Barbara Smith: Beyond HSing into Tertiary and Workforce

3:00-3:30 Afternoon tea

7:00-8:00 Craig Smith: Let Dads Do the Dirty Work

8:00-8:30 Teenage Panel

8:30-9:00 Supper

Clevedon County - Sat 9 Sept: Half Day Workshop

Contact: Sharon Drinnan, ph. (09) 530-8119

Venue: Papakura Baptist Church, 44 Clevedon Rd., Papakura

Cost: \$20 per person/family

10:15-11:30 (A) Sharon Drinnan, Mary Ashby-Peckham: Preschoolers & HSing

(B) Mary-Ann Abplanalp, B Smith: 2ndary Resources & Entering Tertiary.

(C) Marion Vosloo, Alison Haworth: History Unit Studies.

(D) Denise Walmsley: Creating a Music-loving Family

11:30-12 Craig Smith: Ministerial Working Party on Home Schooling

12-1:00 Lunch

1:00-2:15 (A) Denise Walmsley: On the Road to Reading.

(B) Genevieve Smith (chair): Teen panel on self-motivation.

(C) Murray Drinnan (chair): Dads Panel.

2:15-2:45 Afternoon Tea

2:45-4:00 (A) Rosalind Peterson: Science in the Home

(B) B Smith, Dorinda Duthie: Getting started; taking children out of school

(C) Craig Smith, Murray Drinnan: What employers want & how to achieve it

(D) Marsha Fellet: Triggers for the Brain.

Hamilton Home Education Evening 11 September, 7pm

Contact: AnnaMarie, (07) 855-7587 Venue: Hukanui Reformed Fellowship
Church building, Rototuna Rd., Chartwell. Gold coin donation and a plate for
supper. Q&A Session with Craig & Barbara Smith on:

— Maintaining the Vision and Avoiding Burnout

— Homeschooling without a Curriculum

— Beyond Homeschooling into Tertiary and Workforce

— Getting into University for Medicine, Dentistry, Accountancy, etc.

— Teaching Highschool Students

— When Dads Are Not Too Supportive of Homeschooling

— Overview of Warings Tour and Homeschooling in NZ

The Home Educators Network Family Day, Hamilton, 12 September

Contact: Siggie Henry (07) 847-0927 Venue: Charlemont St. Baptist Church
10am-3:30pm, gold coin donation and a plate to share. Chat with Craig & Barbara
Smith. Includes Teen panel: find out what teenagers think about being home
educated, what they are doing on a daily basis and what they enjoy about it.

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the way it should. A survey of Canterbury University academics showed 150 of them “regularly found poor grammar, careless spelling, an inability to read significant amounts of material, and a lack of skills in critical reading among their students.”

While a large number reckoned students were being let down by primary and secondary school systems and deficient teaching methods, Canterbury’s dean of undergraduate studies, John Freeman-Moir, said, “It’s a good deal more complex than that. It would be fair to say that most academics don’t know what goes on in schools.” The statement may be true, but seems completely irrelevant. These academics *do* know what goes on in their undergraduate courses. Sociology tutor Brigid Thompson said there were “some pretty diabolical people” getting university degrees. She tutors students described as semi-literate, with reading ages of 10 or 12. Because one only needs a C-minus to get a degree, they were being significantly undervalued. And University of Canterbury Students’ Association education coordinator Jill Tetley partly blames students’ attitudes toward their fees, which are only 25% of the true cost of delivery (the other 75% being subsidised by the Government). She said that because they paid for their education, they expected the degree to be given to them without taking responsibility for their own learning.

So why do we have schools? Dr John Clark, Senior Lecturer in philosophy of education at Massey University lists five reasons in his course notes: 1) to provide a baby sitting service; 2) to socialise the young into the dominant cultural group; 3) to gain credentials for work; 4) to provide a path for upward social mobility; and yet at the same time, 5) to reproduce the existing cultural inequalities.

Vandalism

After Sherwood School (Browns Bay, Auckland) had suffered over

\$10,000 damage, parents and teachers rostered themselves onto four-hour shifts for three solid weekends, wearing balaclavas and using night-vision goggles, video surveillance and two-way radios. They and the police managed to arrest 12 youths aged 13-21. Principal Warren Patterson commented on the “passion in the community about this particular thing” which saw some parents coming night after night, even doing double shifts. Home educators’ passion for actual education is not cluttered up and interrupted by such expensive and time-wasting concerns. Although I’m sure those night watches with the high-tech gadgets were actually a bit of fun for the Rambo types, it was our taxes paying for all that.

Social Workers

The Minister of Education, the Hon Trevor Mallard, is showing considerable initiative in response to these and other problems. In April his colleague, Minister of Social Services Steve Maharey, MP for Palmerston North, expanded the “Social Workers in Schools” programme so that now we have 67 social workers covering 185 schools in order to help “build strong communities in which all children are physically, emotionally and intellectually supported”, implying rather strongly that many parents are not involved in such pursuits.

The State has clearly decided it is its job to do something about it and doesn’t mind bypassing actual parents in order to provide surrogate parenting through the schools which children are compelled to attend. Mr Maharey said, “Children are the responsibility of the whole community.” Hilary Clinton is fond of quoting the parallel idea that “it takes an entire village to raise a child.” One group willing to counter this PC idea is the Wisconsin Independent School Board Association which says, “Only the village idiot would consider letting the entire village in on the task of raising his children.”

Incorrigibles

In June the Hon Trevor Mallard

turned his attention to those students who are beyond the reach of the kindly social workers: 1,820 students aged 13 to 15 “who have become alienated from their local schools.” These (un?) fortunate souls will get \$20M a year for the next four years to fund their own “alternative education” programmes. That’s nearly \$11,000 per child per year. As Mr Mallard says, “These are people who are no longer willing to attend a regular school, and schools are unwilling to have them in their regular classrooms.”

Values

Also in July Mr Mallard launched the UNESCO and Living Values Trust “Values Education” seminars to be held around the country through November. In his speech the Minister made some remarkably honest and insightful comments: “Whether we like it or not schools and teachers have a strong influence on the developing values of young people and they have that influence whether they plan to or not. We have to acknowledge that all people live by a set of values and that *there is certainly no such thing as value neutrality in education*. It is not an easy thing to meet the obligation to include attitudes and values as an integral part of the New Zealand curriculum. The implicit values education that comes from the way a teacher behaves, the way they speak to children, the kind of control they operate in their own classroom, what is sometimes referred to as the hidden curriculum, cannot be overestimated.” He even listed the attitudes and values desired: “collective responsibility, respect for others, respect for the law, tolerance, caring or compassion, non-sexism, non-racism, honesty, reliability.”

The whole area is a moral minefield. Home educators are glad their children are at home. This is why we prefer to talk about home “education” rather than home “schooling”. They represent two very different worlds, with virtually nothing in common.

