

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 43

October 2000

HEs say NO to National Curriculum Guidelines

This was the clearest finding of the *TEACH Bulletin* Opinion Poll #5, a questionnaire posted out at the end of July 2000. The following analysis was done on 18 October 2000. There were 212 replies from Home Educators (HEs) in the following areas:

9	Northland
59	Auckland
40	Waikato
5	BoP
3	Hawkes Bay
10	Central
7	Taranaki
22	Wellington
8	Top of the South
2	West Coast
21	Canterbury
4	Otago
<u>5</u>	<u>Southland</u>

195 with 17 from parts unknown

The largest point of agreement was a "No" answer for Q5 with 208 (98%) saying it was not a good idea to make the National Curriculum Guidelines compulsory for home educators. The second largest point of agreement among us was at Q1 where 184 (86.8%) said they were in favour of some kind of initiative to see Government enshrine in law the concept that parents have the prior right to determine the type of education and training their children receive.

Two items tied for the third largest point of agreement. 179 (84.4%) said it was not a good idea to require home educators to give an account to the MoE of how they spend the Supervisory Allowance (Q4), and the same number said that most home educators already do involve themselves in "Professional Development" in the very act of home education itself (Q14).

After that it was 160 (75.5%) respondents saying they felt the SA was a token reimbursement of their taxes (Q3d), and then 148 (69.8%) not minding a bit that the SA was linked to signing a Statutory Declaration (Q11). Only one other issue topped the 50% agreement rate, unless we combine some answers, as will be done shortly.

The area of least agreement would be Q12 concerning the ERO's review method. Only 112 were able or willing to rate the ERO with the following results: 27 (24.1%) said it was excellent, 43 (38.4%) said it was good, 31 (27.7%) rated it fair, and 11 (9.8%) called it poor. The method

of gaining an exemption from the MoE rated like this (Q9, with 186 respondents): 27 (14.5%) said excellent, 101 (54.3%) said good, 41 (22.0%) said fair, and 17 (9.1%) said poor. So the MoE got an overall approval rating of 68.8% while the ERO only managed a 62.5% if we just consider "excellent" and "good" ratings, but they scored 90.8% and 90.2% respectively if we include "fair" as an expression of approval.

Respondents in Q2 overwhelmingly indicated (205 in a through d, 96.7%) they would accept an increase in the Supervisory Allowance (SA), but were fairly cautious about any possible strings attached. Over 1/3 (75, 35.4%) said they would only accept it if t(Continued from page 1)

there were no more strings attached than there are now, and
(Continued on page 2)

ERO Questions National Curriculum

The school curriculum is hampering children's learning, is too lenient and needs reviewing, says the Education Review Office.

The office's annual report says the New Zealand Curriculum is damaging students' education because it is too vague and poorly structured. It also suggests that standards may suffer because there is no national assessment to compare children's progress.

Chief review officer Dr Judith Aitken said the curriculum was permissive and did not clearly spell out the standards the Government expected. "Unlike successful benchmark countries such as Singapore, New Zealand's curriculum has never been

comprehensively reviewed or revised, despite its clear limitations and detrimental impacts." She added overdue changes would come from a proposed curriculum stocktake in the next two years.

Lack of national data on children's progress was also having a detrimental impact on students, said Dr Aitken.

(By Stacey Bodger, excerpted from the *NZ Herald*, 13 October 2000).

(As has been said, the MoE has no objective educational standards to which HEs can be held. "Lack of national data on children's progress" means, for example, there is no such thing in NZ as "an 8-year-old reading level". — Ed.)

TEACH Bulletin Opinion Poll #5 (Results)

(Please tick one answer for each question.) (July 2000)

212 respondents as of 19 October

1. Would you generally be in favour of some kind of initiative to see Government enshrine in law the concept that parents have the prior right to determine the type of education and training their children receive?
 - 184 a () Yes
 - 1 b () No
 - 23 c () Don't know/not sure
2. What would be your reaction to a suggested rise in the Home Schooling Supervisory Allowance (SA)?
 - 1 a () I would welcome it with open arms, regardless of whatever extra requirements might come with it.
 - 52 b () I would accept it, as long as there weren't any really intrusive requirements or "strings" attached.
 - 77 c () I would probably accept it, but would need to study whatever strings were attached first.
 - 75 d () I would accept it as long as there were no more strings attached than there are now.
 - 11 e () I could take it or leave it.
 - 1 f () I don't receive it now, nor will I ever touch it.
3. What are your feelings about the Supervisory Allowance? (Feel free to tick more than one answer on this one.)
 - 12 a () It is an economic enticement to keep us close to the state system and ultimately to enslave us.
 - 35 b () It is a gift from the MoE. I have no moral claim to it and the MoE has no legal duty to give it.
 - 72 c () It would be nice to have, but I see danger in becoming psychologically or financially dependent on it, especially if the MoE causes strings to be attached either now or in the future.
 - 160 d () It is a token reimbursement for the taxes I pay toward the state education services I do not use.
 - 64 e () If the MoE wants me to teach "as regularly and well as in a registered school", they should pay me the same for each of my children as schools get for each child attending there.
 - 32 f () It is my right, an entitlement as a resident of NZ, for the state guarantees my children a free education.
 - 14 g () It is money I am owed by the state for doing the state's job: teaching the children.
4. Do you think it would be a good idea to require home educators to give an account to the MoE of how they spend the Supervisory Allowance?
 - 12 a () Yes
 - 179 b () No
 - 20 c () Don't know/not sure
5. Do you think it would be a good idea to make the National Curriculum Guidelines compulsory for all home educators?
 - 2 a () Yes
 - 208 b () No
 - 1 c () Don't know/not sure
6. Imagine that the MoE is thinking about asking home educators to do certain things in order to continue receiving the Supervisory Allowance. Which of these would you agree to? (More than one answer is OK on this one.)
 - 75 a. Provide a simple financial account and receipts of how you spend the SA () Yes () No
 - 27 b. Explain why you spent the Supervisory Allowance as you did () Yes () No
 - 7 c. Use the MoE's National Curriculum Guidelines () Yes () No
 - 44 d. Keep attendance records () Yes () No
 - 23 e. Have your children assessed regularly by an approved agency () Yes () No
 - 14 f. Submit annual curriculum plans in advance for each child () Yes () No
 - 91 g. Have an ERO Review every second year () Yes () No
 - 80 h. Write my own annual assessment report each year () Yes () No
 - 53 i. Keep and submit for inspection an annual journal of work done with each child () Yes () No
 - 4 j. Attend approved Professional Development courses at own expense () Yes () No
 - 42 k. Attend approved Professional Development courses at state's expense () Yes () No
 - 4 l. Work toward gaining a Teacher's Certificate () Yes () No
 - 40 m. None of the above () Yes () No
 - 82 n. I would not submit to any such "strings attached", but would give up the Supervisory Allowance instead () Yes () No
7. School Cert, 6th Form Cert, Bursary are all to be replaced within the next three years with the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) which is to be 50% internally assessed by the classroom teachers. How important is it to you that home educators have access to this new qualification?
 - 27 a () It is absolutely essential: we MUST have access!
 - 18 b () It is very important, and we should try to get access
 - 89 c () We would like to have access, but it's not everything
 - 48 d () It really is a minor issue with us
 - 26 e () We couldn't care less

8. Imagine that the MoE is raising the Supervisory Allowance to \$1,000 per child per year and also thinking about asking home educators to do certain things in order to continue receiving the Supervisory Allowance. Which of these would you agree to? (More than one answer is OK on this one.)
 - 88 a. Provide a simple financial account and receipts of how you spent the SA () Yes () No
 - 28 b. Explain why you bought what you did () Yes () No
 - 3 c. Use the money only on goods and services approved by the MoE () Yes () No
 - 5 d. Use the MoE's National Curriculum Guidelines () Yes () No
 - 53 e. Keep attendance records () Yes () No
 - 24 f. Have children assessed regularly by approved agent () Yes () No
 - 16 g. Submit annual curriculum plans in advance for each child () Yes () No
 - 96 h. Have an ERO Reviews every second year () Yes () No
 - 87 i. Write my own annual assessment report each year () Yes () No
 - 52 j. Keep and submit for inspection an annual journal of work done with each child () Yes () No
 - 4 k. Attend approved Professional Development courses at own expense () Yes () No
 - 41 l. Attend approved Professional Development courses at state's expense () Yes () No
 - 3 m. Work toward gaining a Teacher's Certificate () Yes () No
 - 37 n. None of the above () Yes () No
 - 68 o. I would not submit to any such "strings attached", but would give up the Supervisory Allowance instead () Yes () No
9. How would you rate the present method of gaining an exemption certificate from the MoE (comprehensively answering the several questions on the official form)?
 - 27 a. () Excellent — wouldn't change it
 - 101 b. () Good — could use a few adjustments
 - 41 c. () Fair — needs one or two major changes
 - 17 d. () Poor — needs a total rewrite

What if anything would you change? _____
10. How would you rate the present practice of being required to sign a statutory declaration twice a year?
 - 72 a. () I don't mind a bit
 - 94 b. () It is a bit of an inconvenience
 - 25 c. () It really is a pain
 - 12 d. () I strongly object to this practice
11. How would you rate the present practice of linking the Supervisory Allowance to the statutory declaration?
 - 148 a. () I don't mind a bit
 - 38 b. () I'm uncomfortable with it
 - 13 c. () I strongly object to this practice
12. How would you rate the present method of being Reviewed by an ERO officer?
 - 27 a. () Excellent — wouldn't change it
 - 43 b. () Good — could use a few adjustments
 - 31 c. () Fair — needs one or two major changes
 - 11 d. () Poor — needs a total rewrite
 - 84 e. () Never had one... don't know what's involved

What if anything would you change? _____
13. Are there some school services and resources (like vocational guidance, chemistry labs, etc.) to which home educators should have a right of access?
 - 42 a. () Yes, complete unfettered and free access to all such items
 - 87 b. () Yes, but access to each would need separate negotiation: some free, some for a fee, some not at all
 - 49 c. () There isn't much I would care to access: it's a hassle anyway
 - 19 d. () I went through quite a process to get OUT of the system: why would I want back in?

To which services and resources would you like to have access? _____
14. Do you think home educators should involve themselves in ongoing "Professional Development"?
 - 6 a. () Yes, most aren't up with modern academic and professional trends & developments
 - 23 b. () No, it really isn't that important in the home education environment
 - 179 c. () Well, most already do! It is one of the major side benefits of home education: learning how to teach and re-learning along with the children.

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

spacing of options
along a true
continuum.

Q7 reveals that 163 respondents (answering options c, d or e) or a whopping 76.9% of the entire sample are willing to forgo access to the secondary-level NCEA qualification. Only 27, that is, 12.7% of this sampling of home educators felt access to this qualification was a must. Does this indicate that home educators aren't normally aiming at higher education, or that although they are so aiming, they nevertheless see little

value in the NCEA qualification as a necessary step toward that? Further research is needed.

In Q13 respondents were asked about the right of home educators to access educational services and resources already at schools. The largest group (87, 41.0%) thought access should be via negotiation with schools. This in fact is how it will have to be, as the NZ School Trustees Association affirmed in their letter reproduced on page one of the September 2000 *TEACH Bulletin* No. 42. The next largest group (49, 23.1%) said there wasn't much they'd be interested in anyway, and 19 or 8.96% preferred the sarcasm of "I went through quite a process to get OUT of the system: why would I want back in?" Only 42 or 19.8% felt we should have complete and unfettered access to everything going in the schools. Sorry guys.

(Continued on page 3)

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(Continued from page 2)

Q6 and Q8 were almost the same: the idea was to see if home educators could be persuaded to yield to greater accountability measures ("strings attached") by offering them a significantly larger SA in Q8 of \$1,000 per child per year than the current level (in Q6) of SA which has as its only string attached a six-monthly statutory declaration. There was only a slight movement overall toward accepting more strings attached, an average of 3.16% over the 14 options. The big surprise was the degree to which Kiwi home educators appeared to be willing in Q6 to accept all kinds of accountability measures to simply hang on to the supervisory allowance they already receive. 91 respondents (42.9%) were willing to submit to an ERO review every second year! This is far more than the ERO could possibly do! Eighty (37.7%) said they would write a self-assessment report each year! Providing a simple account and receipts of how they spent the SA was agreeable to 75 respondents, or 35.4% of them. And 53 or exactly 25% of all the respondents indicated they would keep and submit for inspection an annual journal of the work done by each child. The least popular options were attending approved professional development courses at their own expense and working toward gaining a teacher's certificate (4 chose each of these, that being 1.9%); and using the MoE's National Curriculum Guidelines got only 7 takers or 3.3% of all respondents. Questions arise: why do HEs seem so willing to let state agencies intrude and sit in judgment upon their HE activities? Do HEs feel the state

has a legitimate right to do so, over and above what the state currently seeks? Or do they not perceive such extra accountability measures as troublesome compared to the SA money to be received?

Twenty-three respondents complained about confusing, ambiguous or personal exemption questions (Q9). Eight reckoned HEs should only need to give a statement of intent, and seven thought only one exemption per family should be needed. A further five each complained about the requirement for a lesson plan explanation and about doing timetables.

Eight said Review Officers need to understand HEs better (Q12).

Working Party on Home Education Next Year

Minister of Education Trevor Mallard is off overseas for three weeks very soon. He has yet to decide what to do about the proposed working party. By now whatever decision he makes will not take effect until 2001. This gives HEs more time to discuss the issues and to fill in and post back the *TEACH Bulletin* Opinion Poll #6, covering the Working Party issues, which was recently posted out separately.

Schooling Ever Earlier?

“This Government sees early childhood education as an important part of the education system. We are really keen to see better links between early childhood education and the compulsory sector, and I will certainly look favourably at initiatives that work towards this goal.” So said Minister of Education Trevor Mallard as he was speaking to kindergarten presidents and managers in Wellington on Friday 13 October. It signalled a new MoE policy of ensuring that new school sites in the future will include provision for early childhood centres.

“I hope that by looking at early childhood provision before a school site is even bought will ease the establishment of early childhood centres and will help the Government meet one of our objectives to increase participation in early childhood education.”

One wonders if this also signals a future lowering of the compulsory school attendance age to five or less. Possibly these early childhood educational centres will be amalgamated into the schools, making them likewise “free”. Certainly it will work to woo more and more full-time parents away from parenting, for so the Minister effectively declares in his Government’s objective to “increase participation in early childhood education.”

Free Tertiary Education

In a departure from the Alliance’s policy of universal free tertiary education, Alliance leader Jim Anderton suggested targeting just a couple special tertiary subjects to be completely subsidised. At the Alliance conference in Wellington on 16 October, Jim put forward advanced science and engineering as the first guinea-pig subjects. Certainly these areas of study attract very few kiwi students, although the world-wide demand for qualified people in these areas is growing. This is an area for home educators to keep an eye on. But as Jim pointed out, one must be realistic as to what a party at 7.74% can do.

Sir Ron Trotter on Education

It was 2500 years ago that Plato wrote, “The direction in which education starts a man, will determine his future life”. That statement is as true today in our “information society” as it was in Plato’s ancient Greece.

Now, as then, education is often the one ticket out of poverty for the most disadvantaged in society.

It is worthwhile remembering that every child is capable of success, given the right environment. It is little wonder that many parents question whether their school is providing the right environment for their children. Recent government statistics make depressing reading: one-quarter of all adults and three-quarters of all unemployed have substandard reading and writing skills.

Our schools are failing to teach not only basic skills but also basic achievement values. The “tall poppy syndrome” has infected our education system — instead of celebrating and encouraging success, we suppress it. Pouring money into a one-size-fits-all education system is not the answer, particularly in an increasingly multi-cultural society.

It is time to remove education from political society and return it

to civil society. The institutions of civil society — families, businesses and voluntary organisations — must be allowed to take the lead in advocating the interests of our children’s education.

(Excerpted from *The Dominion*, 16 May 2000, p. 13.)

School Pain in the Back

NZ secondary school children are hurting because they stagger to school carrying weights up to twice the recommended industrial level for adults to carry, a Massey-supervised study has found. 79.2% of 140 Auckland third- to sixth-form students surveyed last year complained of feeling pain or discomfort in the muscles or joints of their upper bodies in any one week, because of lugging heavy school gear — the backpack of books, sports gear and possibly a laptop computer. Lack of lockers means students may carry their bags around all day.

Industrial guidelines in developed nations recommend adults should lug no more than four to six kilograms at once. The British Back Pain Association says children should carry not more than 10% of their body weight.

The study found that students were carrying an average total load of 6.6 kilograms everywhere they went. The study further found that third formers were carrying an average of 13.2% of their body weight, and sixth formers an average of 10.3% of their body weight.

Of the 140 students surveyed, 44% reported experiencing pain in their necks in the last week from carrying their school gear; 58% reported pain in their shoulders; 35% said their upper backs hurt and 35% were wincing with lower back twinges.

(Excerpted from *Massey*, Issue 8, April 2000, p. 9)