

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 46

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Education Amendment Bill Dumps School Charters

Long-time home educators are wearing wry smiles these days. Back in 1989 they fought long and hard against the proposal that home educators be compulsorily saddled with charters. This would have lumped them in with educational institutions of every kind which the new laws of the day required to write charters approved by the MoE before they could operate. One reason we fought against them was that the charters were mostly dictated by the MoE with a few fill-in bits to acknowledge the special character of home educators. And those early home educators won their fight with the MoE of the day!

And now the charter idea is being dumped altogether by the MoE! It seems that from 2003 onwards, the requirement for schools to have a school charter will be replaced by a requirement to have an annually updated school plan. Under this scheme school boards will set out their objectives and targets, covering such things as meeting Government educational policy objectives, managing the school's assets, and various aspects of student achievement. The trend is toward reaching specified learning outcomes. In addition, schools will report each year against their annual plan.

These changes may be a cause for concern. They could end up being reflected in the way the MoE assesses exemption applications in the future or what the ERO's Review Officers will be looking for. Will HEs need to specify learning targets and objectives for their children, ideas which are philosophically unacceptable to some home educators?

The Minister has said that education is a key priority for the Labour-Alliance Coalition Government. And so the present Education Amendment Bill #2 before Parliament has a focus on teacher professionalism, enhancing student safety, and strengthening the institutions that provide education to students from early childhood to tertiary.

What this means is changes are afoot. The Minister of Education, Hon Trevor Mallard, said: "It is unfortunately common for us to read and hear stories about unpleasant and dangerous events that have happened to students

while in a school or educational institution." To counter this, the Bill has "a provision to regulate school hostels". It also has "a mandatory code of practice for the care of international students". A third provision to enhance student safety is also designed to improve teacher professionalism. It is the replacement and expansion of the role of the Teacher Registration Board with an Education Council. This proposed Council will conduct police checks on all employees – teachers and non-teachers – who work in schools or early childhood services. The council will also be able to investigate complaints of misconduct. And the Bill has a provision requiring the mandatory reporting of complaints of misconduct. Bear in mind this is

(Continued on page 2)

Special Education Services (SES) Disestablished

Education Minister Trevor Mallard and his associate minister, Lianne Dalziel, have revealed plans to disestablish Specialist Education Services (SES), the country's education service for children with special needs. The current 15 area offices and 54 centres of the SES are likely to be replaced by between 4 and 6 regional centres (with a further 4 to 8 local offices stemming from each one) in the new version which will be controlled by the MoE. It is planned to be set up in February 2002.

The decision follows a report last year by Dr Cathy Wylie (who carried out a wide consultation with schools, parents, educationalists, special education providers and disability organisations) that recommended

the change. She found angry parents and a system rife with inequalities for the 25,000 to 30,000 pupils reliant on SES.

Mr Mallard said he expected several million dollars would be saved by the restructuring. This money would be reinvested in services for children. There might be job losses among the 2500 SES staff, most being absorbed into the MoE, but ultimately there would be more jobs.

The move seems to have gained approval across the spectrum. The head of the Coalition of Parents for Special Education, Colleen Brown, welcomed the changes, as did Quality Public Education Coalition chairman John Minto, although she wanted to know more about the effect on

(Continued on page 3: SES)

(Continued from page 1)

talking about the misconduct of teachers. Teacher Registration Board director John Langley says that, as it stands, schools can and do cover up scandals. Current laws do not require anyone to be notified when a teacher is forced to leave a school due to bad conduct. To his credit Mr Mallard does not want to see a replay of the situation three years ago when a woman teacher who had sex with a fifth former at Wesley College resigned in the aftermath and went on to teach at another Auckland school – without that school being aware of the earlier incident.

This gives home educators little to rejoice over. Many friends and family members are still in this school system, and such moves may cause them to think the system is getting better or safer. They would miss the point: what is the condition of the system now? How are their children being affected today?

Further changes proposed in the Bill include giving the MoE increased powers of intervention in poorly performing schools as

well as changes to the teaching of the health and physical education curriculum so that schools cannot opt out completely from teaching the sexuality aspects of the curriculum. NZ Olympian Dick Quax had something to say about this in the *Southland Newsletter* of 25 January this year. Mr Quax said in part:

Last month it was revealed that 200,000 NZers do not read well enough to follow instructions on a bottle of pills from the pharmacy. This is not rocket science. It's "take two tablets, three times a day after meals" kind of stuff. Then, presumably to distract us from this shocking news, the Minister of Education, Trevor Mallard, informs us that sex education in schools will become compulsory. The very same teachers who can't teach our kids to read or write are now going to teach them about sex. It is not surprising then that parents are losing faith in our education system.

The problem isn't the kids, or their parents or even the teachers but the system, a monopoly run by politicians, educational bureaucrats and teacher's unions.... Make no mistake: teacher's unions have their own interests at heart not your child's.

[Information for the above was extracted from a 12 December 2000 article by Pat Booth, Editor - in - Chief of Suburban Newspapers and a post on The School Daily of 26 Feb 2001, www.theschooldaily.com/articleView.asp?articlePK=5084.]

International Baccalaureate in New Zealand

Christchurch Baccalaureate College will continue the proud tradition of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) from 2002 by becoming the first New Zealand school to offer the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme for Years 7-11 (Form 1-5), in tandem with the new National Certificate of Education Achievement.

From 2003, CBC will also become the first New Zealand school to specialise in the International Diploma for Years 12-13 (Forms 6-7).

The Primary Years Programme will be offered in 2004.

Home educators seeking academic excellence have asked about this programme, whether it would be offered by correspondence. The IBO's brochure says, "Beyond intellectual rigour and high academic standards, strong emphasis is placed on the ideals of international understanding and responsible citizenship." Sounds good.

When I spoke to them a couple of years ago they were not interested in offering lessons by correspondence. Perhaps it was because their brochure stressed the high teacher/pupil ratio and overall academic environment offered by the school's premises. Tuition and Registration fees are as follows (these are for day students, not boarders):

Year 7 to Year 8.....\$7,000
Year 9 to Year 10.....\$8,000
Year 11.....\$9,000
Year 12 (open 2003).....\$10,000
Year 13 (open 2004).....\$10,000

Oh, and these are GST exclusive.

Christchurch Baccalaureate College, PO Box 33256, Christchurch, New Zealand. Ph: (03) 339-6301 Fax: (03) 339-6302, info@cbc.school.nz

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

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Serena
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Kawakawa

(Continued from page 1: *SES*)

families. The Educational Institute supported the Government move, President Amanda Coulston saying that the fragmentation created under the old system had resulted in duplicated costs, varied levels of service and a lack of accountability.

PPTA deputy general secretary Ruth Chapman believes it will spell a more consistent delivery throughout the country and that teachers would be able to develop better links with the community. Palmerston North Development and Support Centre group spokeswoman Angela Harper said, "Anything that removes the unnecessary layers of bureaucracy is welcomed."

The most encouraging comments from a home educator's perspective were those made by Alliance education and disability spokeswoman Liz Gordan. She said the decision paved the way "for a future where there will be a one stop shop for parents, teachers and young people with disabilities to get their needs met."

(Info from NZ Herald of 20/2/01 and Manawatu Evening Standard of 21/2/01.)

~~Home Education in Japan~~

The following appeared in the Japan Child Research Newsletter of January 2001. It is from an article titled "Toward Education that Fosters Aspirations" by Soichiro Fukutake, President of the Benesse Corporation.

Over the past twenty years, Benesse Educational Institute has conducted surveys on the everyday lives of Japanese children. These surveys show us that there are three problematic

trends among Japanese children today. First, Japanese children no longer seem to set future goals and their desire for learning has tended to decline. Second, compared with other countries, Japanese children have an extremely low opinion of themselves in terms of self-confidence and positive feelings about themselves. Third, a sense of ethics and an awareness of the proper bounds of conduct such as observing rules have weakened. While children today do want to acquire and develop various skills, for instance, to keep abreast of advances in information technology, these three trends would seem to indicate that children no longer have aspirations for the future. They have lost a sense of aspiring to live their lives in a certain way. These tendencies are not simply problems that only children have. They are troubling tendencies that we can see in the inner lives of all Japanese people, children and adults alike, as we approach the 21st century.

From the beginning of compulsory education in the Meiji era to the post-WWII educational reforms, the major objective of the national education system as defined by the Ministry of Education has been "to catch up and overtake western industrialized countries". To accomplish this, the Ministry adopted policies to promote and provide equal and standardized education to all citizens. Having grown accustomed to this, many people have taken a passive stance toward the government policies and guidance. Education has actually become something that is granted from the top down. This has had enormous effect on the minds and behavior of Japanese people, including children.

It is a concern to the Japanese. It should be a concern to us kiwis as well since too many of us see education in similar terms: something that is best obtained via the official, well-funded state schooling institutions staffed by the educational professionals. The problem is, education is not a commodity, nor is it in short

Is Your Home a Physically and Emotionally Safe Environment?

supply, nor does it become more scarce as more people obtain it for themselves. It is free and virtually unlimited to anyone who wants to dig it up for themselves. Once we teach our children to read and a few research skills, they can teach themselves virtually anything. They may not have a paper qualification at the end (which is, in the final analysis, only evidence of schooling), but they will be educated. Education and schooling are not the same things.

However, even in Japan, “more and more parents are rejecting the idea of sending their children to school and are instead taking direct responsibility for educating them at home.”

So writes Tatsuhiko Yoshizawa in the *Asahi* (Japan) Evening News of 28 August 2000. He goes on to say that Japan’s Constitution and the Fundamental Education law both state: “Citizens shall be obligated to ensure that all boys and girls under their protection receive a standard education as provided for by law.” However, it is not stipulated where that education ought to take place. Consequently Akira Nakagawa, a professor at Hokkaido University of Education and a specialist in the law as it applies to education, says, “The Constitution permits parents to choose a place other than a school for their children to receive a standard education.” Deciding how children are to be educated, he maintains, is ultimately a natural right of their parents.

Brian Covert, an American freelance journalist living in Minoo (Osaka Prefecture) and homeschooling with his Japanese wife writes: “Probably the most accurate description of what we do and why we do it comes from Tomiko Kugai, a respected Japanese homeschooling advocate in Himeji, Hyogo Prefecture, who has been homeschooling her teenage daughter for several years. Kugai calls homeschooling ‘a way of shared upbringing in which the home, libraries, museums, parks and so forth are used as learning resources for

(Continued on page 6: Japan)

The *TEACH Bulletin* editor wrote the following letter on 31/1/01 to the ERO’s Public Relations Officer, Jenny Clark:

Below is a paragraph from the *Manukau Courier*, 27 Jan 2001, titled “Breaking the Bullying Stranglehold”, by Elizabeth Binning:

The Education Review Office’s (ERO) national manager of review services, Karen Sewell, says the ERO’s role is to ensure schools fulfil their legal obligation to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students.

When Brian Donnelly became Minister responsible for the ERO, I asked him some questions regarding the relationship between the ERO and home schoolers. One question was whether the ERO would look, during reviews of home schoolers, at the parents and their teaching and curriculum or at the children and their learning and environment. He answered almost the same as the words above, that the ERO would be looking to see that home schooling families provided “a safe physical and emotional environment for students”.

Could you please answer the following three questions?

The ERO’s response to each question on 12/2/01 was as follows:

1. Do schools really have a “legal obligation to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students”? What section(s) of the Education Act should I refer to?

Section 60A of the Education Act 1989 provides for the Minister of Education to publish National Education Guidelines namely

National Education Goals, National Curriculum Statements and National Administrative Guidelines.

By law, the National Education Guidelines form part of the charter of every state school. Section 61(2) of the Education Act 1989 states:

“Every school charter and proposed charter shall be deemed to contain the aim of achieving, meeting and following (as the case may be) the national education guidelines”

Boards are responsible for taking all reasonable steps to meet the requirements of the National Education Guidelines. In practice this means that each school develops policies, practices, and programmes that meet the requirements of the National Education Guidelines by:

following the broad philosophical directions set for schooling by the National Education Goals;

establishing teaching and learning programmes that provide opportunities for all students to achieve the objectives identified in national curriculum statements;

meeting management and accountability requirements specified in the National Administration Guidelines.

National Administration Guideline 5 provides that

“Each Board of Trustees is also required to:

provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students; comply in full with any legislation currently in force or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students.”

2. Is it really part of the ERO’s role to ensure that schools are providing such environments? Is this also a legal obligation (found in an Act of Parliament) or part of ERO’s organisational brief/policy?

Section 325 of the Education Act

1989 provides that it is a function of the Chief Review Officer to conduct reviews relating to either general or particular matters of the performance of educational institutions.

How well a school meets the requirements of the National Education Guidelines falls well within that function (including National Administrative Guideline number 5).

3. Does the ERO also see its role when reviewing home educators as one of ensuring that the students are provided with safe physical and emotional environments?

Section 21 provides that a child may be exempted by the Secretary of Education from the requirement to be enrolled in a registered school if the Secretary is satisfied that the child will be taught at least as regularly and well as in a registered school.

ERO is empowered under section 328A to carry out reviews of the educational services being provided to children exempted from the requirement to be enrolled at a registered school.

Parents providing the education for their child are not obliged to comply with the National Administration Guidelines, and ERO does not review against these when reviewing home educators.

Nevertheless, whether a child receives education at school or at home, the physical state of the environment in which they are being educated is taken into account as an important aspect of the creation of good conditions for learning.

Where the environment in which a child receives education is not safe their right to education is fettered and every child between the ages of six and sixteen has the right to education, regardless of whether the education takes place in a registered school or at home.

The Education Review Office's primary responsibility with regard

to homeschooling reviews, under section 21 of the Education Act 1989, is to ensure that the child is being taught at least as regularly and well as in a registered school. To satisfy this requirement, the educator is required to provide an environment for the child which is conducive to learning. To provide good learning conditions, the environment must be safe for the child.

The Chief Review Officer would expect a review officer undertaking an accountability review of a child exempted from attendance at a registered school to report any situation where, in that review officer's opinion, the physical safety of the child is at risk.

Jenny Clark, Manager Public Affairs, Education Review Office may be contacted at:

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clark@ero.govt.nz

US Teachers Oppose Home Education

Toward the end of last year, the National Education Association, a union of school teachers, one of the largest and most powerful unions in the United States, reaffirmed at its annual convention the following statement, which was originally published as part of Resolution B-68, adopted in 1988:

The National Education Association believes that home schooling programs cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience. When home schooling occurs, students enrolled must meet all state requirements. Home schooling should be limited to the children of the immediate family, with all expenses being borne by the parents/guardians. Instruction should be by persons who are licensed by the appropriate state education licensure agency, and a curriculum approved by the state

department of education should be used.

The Association also believes that home-schooled students should not participate in any extracurricular activities in the public schools.

The Association further believes that local public school systems should have the authority to determine grade placement and/or credits earned toward graduation for students entering or re-entering the public school setting from a home school setting.

The resolution, which totals a mere 131 words, is revealing. It is a statement of belief, with no supporting data, presuming that the state mandated schooling requirements and state-approved curricula are best and must be imposed on all children and then only by those who have gained a state license to do so. They also claim the authority to judge the quality of the education received at home against their own state-mandated criteria and want to exclude home educated students from the all important social or extracurricular activities.

When asked to explain their position, NEA spokesperson Kathleen Lyons first admitted that the organization does not have an "expert on home schooling." Lyons went on to say, "It's our feeling that public schools are the best choice for parents. What we want to do is to ensure that that truth is more than our belief -- that it is a fact."

Well, it isn't a fact at present. Home-schooled students have continually demonstrated academic success over the years. Last year home-schoolers placed first, second and third in a national (USA) spelling bee and won a national geography bee. In the most recent American College Testing assessment, home-educated students obtained the highest overall score. The NEA Resolution would seem to indicate that the teachers of America would prefer the use of political force to make their belief true by

*(Continued on page 6: **Oppose**)*

(Continued from page 5: *Oppose*)
effectively banning most home education alternatives.

We in New Zealand can be very thankful that public school teachers here do not share such negative attitudes. Nevertheless, Lyons says NEA believes public schools are superior, not only for their academic opportunities, but also because of the socialization they offer children. She said public schools teach things beyond the stated curriculum. Home educators are well aware of this and often declare it to be one of the major benefits of home education: being spared the “extra curricular subjects” taught not only by other students but sometimes by teachers as well.

(Continued from page 4: *Japan*)
children along with the support of grown-ups -- without the children attending school. In homeschooling, first and foremost, the child plays the leading role.”

To find out more about homeschooling in Japan, visit the English language website at: <http://www2.gol.com/users/milkat/articles.html>

Home Education: Social & Academic Haven

School fees for some now include payments for regular drug tests as a condition of allowing the student to stay in school. Post Primary Teachers Association president Jen McCutcheon said schools were now less likely to rely on “knee-jerk” suspensions, opting instead to work with young drug users. Education Ministry figures show that drugs were the most common reason for suspensions last year, with 1506 cases. Secondary School Principals Association president Tom Robson said drug use in schools was increasing, but decriminalising cannabis was the

Coming Events

Sixth Annual TEACH Forum

Saturday 28 April 2001
Christ Church Anglican
church hall, 169 Ladies Mile,
Ellerslie, Auckland
(up the hill on the left past the
health food shop)
From 9:30am until 3:00pm.

An open, home education leadership forum and opportunity for HEs from all over to meet and discuss any and all issues of common concern, both local and national, and plan whatever further action seems appropriate. The day's agenda is formed by the people there. Registration is free. Tea/coffee/milo provided; lunch is BYO or check out the local coffee shops. No children's programme. Free billeting for those from out of town. Register numbers coming with: Craig & Barbara Smith, PO Box 9064, Palmerston North, ph. (06) 357-4399, fax (06) 357-4389, hedf@xtra.co.nz.

wrong option. It is, however, the option apparently favoured by self-proclaimed “libertarian” Laila Harre who holds the Cabinet portfolio of Youth Affairs Minister in this present Government.

While government Ministers such as Harre and school personnel disagree on how to proceed, school children as young as 10 are showing up with “Monday syndrome”: having consumed drugs and alcohol during the weekend, they are now too stoned to learn. Many home educators would say this is symptomatic of an overall “School Syndrome” wherein 1) parents have abdicated many of their responsibilities to the school and playmates which together occupy their children for most of their waking hours; 2) the children feel rejected and alienated from parents who are required by law to send them away from home at age six, and usually pressured by society to send them away at age five; and 3) the whole situation is

North Shore Information Workshop

Saturday 5 May 2001
9:30am to 3:00pm
Windsor Park Baptist Church
550 East Coast Rd.
Mairangi Bay
North Shore City

- \$25 per person or couple
- AM & PM teas provided
- Wide range of resources on display and for sale
- Twelve electives including: — Helping Children with Written Language; — Father's Role; — Special Needs Discussion; — Teenagers' Panel; — Secondary Resources, Subject by — Charlotte Mason approach — Building a Family Heritage on Scriptural Principles; — Home Education: 0-6 yrs; — Beyond Secondary: Qualifications, Apprenticeships & Employment

For further information and registration, please phone:

compounded as successive generations are subjected to these destructive pressures.

It is not surprising then, to hear that many tertiary students lack basic maths skills. A study by the Manukau Institute of Technology compared the actual maths skills of 280 students, including those studying for engineering and business degrees, to what lecturers expected of them. MIT maths lecturer Iain Huddleston was astounded at the results which showed some students could not even answer fourth form level maths questions.

(Information extracted from an article by Oskar Alley in the Wellington *Dominion* of 25 January 2001 and an Xtra News story of 9 February 2001.)