

Trevor Mallard's Vision — ICT

When launching the Ministry of Education's draft Information and Communications Strategy for schools, Education Minister Trevor Mallard was asked to set out his vision for education.

That vision is:

"For all students, irrespective of their backgrounds, to develop the knowledge, understandings, skills and attitudes to participate fully in society, to achieve in a global economy, and to have a strong sense of identity and culture."

According to Mr Mallard, this vision builds upon Peter Fraser's famous words as New Zealand's first Labour Minister of Education when he said in 1939:

"The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers."

Let's look at what is being said here. Mr Mallard wants NZ's children to be able to participate fully in society, achieve in a global economy and have a strong sense of identity and culture. Because it is Mr Mallard saying this, it is clear that he wants the schools to prepare children to do these things, and that these are to be the three most important broad-stroke objectives of the schools. Because he goes on to make a point of Peter Fraser being a member of Labour, as is he, and

because the current Labour Party formed a coalition with the Alliance rather than with National or ACT to form the present Government, we know that these objectives are loaded with political agendas. This is nothing new: it is how the party system works. And, further, we can identify the political agendas of the schooling system's objectives as coming from the left side of the political/philosophical spectrum.

This has very definite implications for what Mr Mallard means when he uses the term "global

economy", for macro-economics is driven more by philosophical considerations than it is by practical mechanical issues of, for example, supply and demand. So whose philosophy will be promoted in the schools? It is the same when we consider the term "participate fully in society". But it is even more obvious regarding "strong sense of identity and culture". How are state schooling institutions going to help students have a "strong sense of identity and culture" in a pluralistic society? Which culture, which identify is going to be promoted? Perhaps each one will be considered as equally valid, or perhaps the teachers will need to cobble together a composite culture/identity suitable for that particular classroom. The secular

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Sitting SAT Exams in New Zealand

Scholastic Assessment Test
Scholastic Achievement Test
Scholastic Aptitude Test

It seems you can take your pick as to what SAT stands for, but it is a major standardised exam sat by tens of thousands of American high schoolers each year. The scores are used by admissions officers at American universities to determine if the student has the scholastic aptitude to be a success at the institution.

The NZ Vice-Chancellors' Committee, the body that oversees admissions policies for all New Zealand universities, has said that SAT scores may be used *in conjunction* with an academic certificate of some kind (or some other evidence to show schooling to the level of Form 6) to support an application to a New Zealand

university. On its own SAT is not considered to be an entrance qualification.

University admissions officers are well aware of what SAT scores signify. Home educated individuals can apply for Provisional Enrolment at any New Zealand university with no official academic qualifications or test scores whatever and still gain entrance on the strength of the student's ability to demonstrate one way or another that he or she has the scholastic aptitude to be a success at the institution. Reasonable SAT scores will obviously enhance the home educator's capabilities in the eyes of the admissions officer.

There are two SAT tests; the SAT I Reasoning Test (general test)

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clause (S.77) of the Education Act makes it illegal to promote religion. So it would seem that religious folks are going to have the most important parts of their cultures and identities regarded as taboo or unimportant or irrelevant...hardly conducive to a secure self-image or relaxed interpersonal relationships. But then these things aren't enumerated by Mr Mallard in his vision statement.

Already in this discussion there will be a significant number of home educators who will be reminded afresh of some of the reasons why they are glad they have pulled their children out of the state school system.

Now, to accomplish these objectives, Mr Mallard says (and here he uses a stock phrase he repeats in many different contexts) that schools need to help students develop "knowledge, understandings, skills and attitudes". Unless you have been dozing quietly with Rip van Winkle, you know that these words are also loaded with political and sociological agendas. Trevor Mallard himself said at the

launching of the "Values Education" seminars in July 2000, that there is no such thing as value neutrality in education. When chair of the NZQA, Sir Neil Waters said that schools are not only to educate kids but to socialise them as well: and he did not mean teaching the social graces. Dr John Clark of Policy Studies in Education at Massey University said the top two reasons we have schools in New Zealand is to fulfil the demand for baby sitting services and to "socialise young children into a set of moral values and cultural practices". Phillip Capper the past head of the PPTA said, "What I would like to see in the political debate about education is a recognition that public education is an exercise in social engineering by definition".

So what are Mr Mallard's list of attitudes he would see the schools promote? He has spoken on this issue: "collective responsibility, respect for others, respect for the law, tolerance, caring or compassion, non-sexism, non-racism, honesty, reliability." It is not exactly the Ten Commandments. Nor does it

parallel the Scouts' promise to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. And the seven cardinal virtues of a De Molay (a Masonic organisation for 14-21 year olds) are filial love, reverence for God, c o u r t e s y , comradeship, fidelity, cleanness and patriotism. The NZ Ministry of Education is definitely setting up its own cultural values and, through the services of the c o m p u l s o r y attendance clauses of the Education Act, ensuring that every NZ child is brainwa...., I mean, is

afforded the opportunity to be educated in this way. Meanwhile, bullying and drug use and expulsions and suspensions go up, while overall academic achievement indicators stagnate or go down. Hopefully, these negative aspects will diminish as Mr Mallard's vision is implemented.

Again, we home educators are reminded why we home educate: to provide a superior social and academic environment, one that is not compromised by what may well be competing value systems, offensive philosophies or contradictory authority figures.

Mr Mallard has been very busy of late implementing his vision. And it would seem that the knowledge, understanding and skills he has been talking about centre around ICT (Information and Communication Technology). Just this month he addressed the Compaq Education Conference on the topic "eLearning – shaping the future of tomorrow's schools". He said, "For the sake of our children's learning and of our future as a society – and an economy -- we must keep up with the fast-moving advances in ICT." He makes these assertions with nothing to back them up. Indeed, the assertions are based on purely speculative assumptions about the future and the role ICT will play in that future.

He has introduced the Digital Opportunities pilot projects, of which there are four: FarNet, Generation XP, Notebook Valley and Study Support Centres. These are focused on providing students with opportunities to enhance learning of science and maths subjects using the wealth of resources on the Internet. Perhaps more significantly they represent "a partnership between schools, business and government". "It is proving to be a positive experience for everybody involved, including businesses," enthused Mr Mallard. Too right! Did you know that virtually every New Zealand school now has Internet access, that four out of five schools have at least one

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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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Evelyn
ph. (09) 439-2077
Northland

The man who does things makes many mistakes, but he never makes the biggest mistake of all: doing nothing.

--Benjamin Franklin

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computer in each classroom and that half of all schools have computers networked across the school? That definitely has to be good for somebody's (computer) business. Yet individual students get only a bare minimum of meaningful time on those computers.

Some recent initiatives taken include: an electronic principals' network; at least 600 laptops becoming available each year from 2002; an ICT Helpdesk for schools that will start operating in January; signing a contract with Compaq to develop a management information and resourcing system called MIR, which will help streamline some existing systems and develop a new web site known as School SMART. And of course the latest \$10 million deal with Microsoft to provide, for 2002 and 2003 only, all state and integrated schools, and their staff, with computer software. That is to say, apart from the administrative ICT helps already mentioned, school staff will be able to have this range of software (Microsoft Office, Works, Front Page, etc., etc.) in their homes for free, or that is, courtesy of NZ taxpayers. So far, it seems the real winners here are state and integrated schools, their staff, Microsoft and Compaq. Oh well, I guess they are hoping for a trickle-down effect to benefit the students. Please, remind me: why do we have state schools?

With a great paucity of any research showing how ICT benefits traditional academic outcomes, what must parents think who send their children along to these schools, paying a stack of dollars a year in school fees (our neighbour pays a state school \$300 a term), and then getting taxed to pay for these benefits to computer firms and teachers? We home educators can at least rejoice that we do get some cash in hand in the form of a homeschooling allowance. We can determine exactly how that is spent, targeting it with pinpoint accuracy, and observe closely whatever immediate benefits it

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shand@ts.co.nz

New ERO CEO

Secondary school teachers are happy about the appointment of Karen Sewell as new head of the Education Review Office. Ms Sewell has been acting chief executive of ERO since December last year when controversial former head Dr Judith Aitken finished her term. A Government review of the ERO earlier this year found it had to be less critical of schools and more responsive to their needs.

Parents ARE to Blame

A July 11 *Washington* (D.C., USA) *Post* article quotes government school employees waxing nostalgic for the good old days, when maintaining discipline wasn't so tough. Here is the unsurprising headline coming from our great capital city: "Schools Awash in Bad Behavior: Area Educators Complain of Students Out of Control."

Kicking, hitting, spitting, threats of arson, even pre-pubescent flashing: all these and more, we are told, have become standard fair in D.C. area elementary schools. What's to blame? "Video games and TV shows; lingering neurological problems in children

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and the SAT II (subject tests). The SAT I is a three-hour multiple-choice test that measures verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities that develop over time. The SAT II subject tests are one-hour multiple-choice tests in specific subjects. The SAT II measures your knowledge of a particular subject and your ability to apply that knowledge.

There are several test centres around New Zealand. Test dates usually fall on the second Saturday in October, the first Saturdays in November and December, the last Saturday in January and the first Saturdays in May and June. If you live more than 125 miles from the nearest test centre it is possible for you to request a "supplemental test centre" to be opened closer to home. You will then be required to follow the special directions outlined in the bulletin and register by mail by the supplemental registration deadline.

The schedule for the 2001-2002 testing cycle is as follows:

<u>Test Dates</u>	<u>Locations</u>	<u>Registration Deadline</u>	<u>Supplemental Registration Deadlines</u>
3 Nov 2001	Auckland Christchurch Fairlie Wanganui Wellington	28 Sept 2001	5 Sept 2001
1 Dec 2001	Auckland Christchurch Fairlie Invercargill Nelson Wanganui Wellington	27 Oct 2001	4 Oct 2001
26 Jan 2002	Auckland Christchurch Wellington	21 Dec 2001	29 Nov 2001
4 May 2002	Auckland Christchurch Wanganui Wellington	29 March 2002	7 March 2002
1 June 2002	Christchurch Wanganui	26 April 2002	3 April 2002

For more information on study guides, information packs and other resources see contacts below.

The SAT Exams are administered in NZ by:

Fulbright New Zealand, New Zealand-US Educational Foundation
Level 4, Norseman House, 120-124 Featherston Street, Wellington

Ph.: (04) 499-6218 Fax: (04) 499-5364

educate@fulbright.org.nz

www.fulbright.org.nz

SAT Prep software at:

<http://www.studentmarket.com/studentmarket/satsoftware.html>

SAT explanation at:

<http://www.studentmarket.com/studentmarket/aboutsat.html>

Previous SAT papers at:

<http://surendranath.tripod.com/sat.html>

Creators of SAT and helpful info at:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/>

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born to drug users; diagnoses of behavior and mental disorders that are increasing faster than anyone's ability to address them." You know, a round up of the usual suspects.

And which suspect tops the list? Parents, of course. But this time I have to agree with the article. The parents *are* to blame.....for putting their children into government schools in the first place.

(From "The School Liberator", 13 July 2001, Volume 1, Number 20, www.sepschool.org)

More Money Does Not Educate

(The following two articles from the USA point to the fact that HES can do just as well without large financial budgets....and that the bulk of state tax-funded school moneys are not spent on teaching children anyway.)

Article 1: The Heritage Foundation recently published a study by education analysts Kirk Johnson and Krista Kafer that confirms there is a zero correlation between money spent and student achievement. Citing information from the National Center for Educational Statistics, they report that in inflation-adjusted dollars, America spends 72 percent more for education today than in 1980. Annual spending per pupil, adjusted for inflation, increased from \$3,367 in 1970 to \$6,584 in 2000.

These increases in spending yielded no academic improvement. K-12 math scores and reading scores during the last two decades are flat, with an increase in the gap between white and black students.

Since 1965, the federal government has spent over \$120 billion on Title I programs for low-income students, but the achievement gap between poor and non-poor students has not improved.

Nationwide, the number of students per teacher decreased

from 22 in 1970 to less than 17 in 1999. Student test scores did not improve. The number of computers in the classroom increased from one for every 63 students in 1985 to one for every 5 students in 2000. Student achievement did not improve.

Billions of dollars have been spent on a huge bilingual educational bureaucracy, only to discover that standard bilingual education of immigrant children actually delays their ability to read and write English.

Last year the Department of Education announced that 68 percent of fourth-graders could not read at a "proficient level". How long will it take us to learn that increasing the budgets of failed programs is no substitute for real reform?

(From "Congressional Spending Spree" by Linda Bowles, <http://www.townhall.com/columnists/lindabowles/lb20010710.shtml>)

(One commentator on this article responded: "Government schools *are* a success at achieving their goals -- which is indoctrination rather than education -- and politicians are not about to mess with success." — Ed.)

Article 2: Nearly half of the schools participating in Milwaukee's (Wisconsin, USA) private school-choice program had to return money to the state last year, according to the American Enterprise Institute. Under the program, low-income students are given vouchers to attend private and religious schools. As hard as they tried, the private schools just couldn't spend the \$4,894 they were given to educate each of their school-choice children. St. John Kanty School, the lowest-cost school in the choice program, spent \$3,096 to educate each student last year. School administrator Lois Maczuzak explained, "We don't have to pay for a huge administration and a lot of red tape." Meanwhile, Milwaukee public school officials are preparing to approve a 2000-01 budget that comes to about \$9,500

per student.

(From *Human Events*, September 22, 2000, p. 28.)

T-Shirt Turnaround

One never knows the influence of ~~the printed word!~~ The Problem: The US Military was considering regulations forcing its personnel posted overseas to use its military schools rather than home school. The Solution: Last April President Bush's senior policy advisor spotted seven children wearing Bush T-shirts. He introduced himself to their mother and invited the family to meet the president and his wife at the White House. At a later meeting with Home School Legal Defence Association, President Bush remembered this incident and said he "wanted to do more for home schoolers." This opened the door for HSLDA to highlight the military's move toward regulation of home schoolers and to gain the White House's help.

(From <http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?ID=204>, HSLDA Weekly Update, 17 Aug 2001.)

Kiwis Too Modest

~~"New Zealand is known around the world as a country of sheep~~ and extreme sports, not of ideas and innovation. The Tourism Board does nothing to fight these stereotypes," says American academic Howard Frederick, professor of innovation and entrepreneurship at Unitec and author of the report *The Knowledge Economy*, 1999.

So what's the problem? New Zealanders' "unrelenting modesty" keeps us from being taken seriously on the global stage, so we risk becoming "an amusement park and holiday land for the citizens of more developed economies" unless we embraced the knowledge economy. "We are world-class globally. New Zealanders are the most lateral-thinking innovators. In any situation New Zealanders are number one in the world," said Professor Frederick. However in

export structure, he said, New Zealand was still as dependent on primary commodities as Kenya. "New Zealanders will give you 50 percent of the truth and hope that you impute the rest, whereas an American will give you 200 percent of the truth and believe half of what you say. That's a problem in the global market."

The problem was cultural: in addition to the comfy boat syndrome, the "she'll be right" complex and misplaced egalitarian ideas, NZ suffers from the Tall Poppy Syndrome: we knock those who excel. People like Sir Gil Simpson, founder of Jade Software and "the Bill Gates of NZ", will drive around Christchurch in a Jaguar and hear people say, "Who does he think he is?". Yet former Victoria University Vice-Chancellor Michael Irving, who resigned after staff expressed no confidence in him, gets a golden handshake of 2-1/2 years' salary. This is penalising success and rewarding failure.

I know a South African electronics engineer who has worked with other such engineers all over the globe. He says categorically the kiwi electronic engineers are the best in the world. Why? Because unlike their colleagues overseas who typically throw up their hands when they come across an aspect of a project outside of their theoretical or practical training and wait for those trained in that area to fix it, the kiwi will either nut out the

Bizarro by Dan Piraro

Your university application is very impressive: high school valedictorian, Student Council President, captain of every sport team your school offered, four undefeated seasons in every sport, voted "Most Likely to Succeed" and "Most Popular", Prom King, perfect attendance record....



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*HE through secondary and into
tertiary and workforce

*Fathers Role & Vision for the
Future

Contact:

Craig & Barbara, ph. (06) 357-
4399, hedf@xtra.co.nz

problem himself or collect one or two mates working nearby and present the challenge. This South African said the kiwi will almost always come up with a solution, and usually one that is superior to whatever classical text-book solutions may be found. And yet the kiwi electronics engineer typically thinks of himself as a third-rate, know-nothing, backwater hick. In my own 28 years in New Zealand I've seen exactly this same put-yourself-down attitude again and again.

Parents, your home educated children are destined to be the Tall Poppies: let's lead the way in stopping the knocking and in capitalising on our heritage of "Kiwi Ingenuity".

(Parts extracted from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/in1/print/0,1103,825309a1501,FF.html,13/6/01>.)

Stock Your Library

Most Public Libraries run a ~~system whereby they receive~~ suggestions from the public as to what books and magazines to buy and have on their shelves. Many have a card or form you can fill out which they then file. Some will authorise their purchaser to buy the book once a certain number of requests for that book have been lodged. Why not organise the members of your Support Group to start suggesting books on home education your

Challenging the Concepts of Education

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8:30am to 3:40pm &

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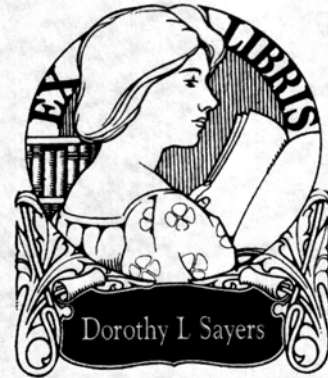
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A New Zealand Home Educator's
Guidebook

Preparing for an ERO Review

by Craig S. Smith

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