

### Common Traits of Successful Teachers

An article in the first 2002 issue of *set: Research Information for Teachers* (published by New Zealand Council for Educational Research)<sup>1</sup> reports that case studies of nine highly successful teachers working in Auckland's poor urban primary schools found that they all shared eleven combined beliefs and attitudes. These can all be adopted and practised by home educators with little effort. In fact, many if not most home educators reflect these same characteristics as a matter of course.

Note first of all that these desirable traits are described as "beliefs and attitudes". The teachers' professional training may have had very little impact on their beliefs or their attitudes. They are more likely to be products of their backgrounds and upbringing combined with their life experiences.

**They are very goal driven.** Home educating parents should also have a picture of their end product in mind: what they want their children to be like, as well as what they don't want to see in them. It is something that grows and develops over time, but keeps a person future oriented, focussed and on track.

**They are keen to reflect on their practice** just as home educators and virtually all thinking parents reflect on their parenting and teaching skills in regards to their own children. Parents have the added advantage of being with their children up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so they can see and reflect upon both short- and long-term reactions to

every move they make.

**They are stimulated by all forms of professional development.** Home educators all over the country voluntarily form themselves into support groups which contribute a great deal to a home educator's professional development. There are uncounted evenings with guest speakers; annual camps; local, national and international newsletters and journals; websites; a dozen or more email discussion groups for home educators just in NZ, not counting the many overseas ones; national tours by visiting speakers; the de-

velopment of specialist resource libraries; and many all-day workshops in various centres. Home educators are in fact very well catered for in regards to professional development, and it is all privately volunteered as opposed to state subsidised.

**They accept and value individuals and their differences.** This is one of the natural reactions of caring parents to their own children. They are natural students of all the quirks, eccentricities, tendencies, likes, dislikes, talents, biases, giftings and motivations of each of their children. Because no one is more committed to each child than Mum, mums know each of their children intimately.....until such time as the children are required to leave home for an insti-

(Continued on page 2: **Traits**)

### Parents and Siblings Help Others Succeed

Tapu Misa wrote in the *NZ Herald* of 18 September about the continuing low rate of Pacific Island students gaining high school qualifications. Yet she had some astounding insights into why some Pacific students do well.

"I've talked to enough Pacific Island successes to know that academic and sporting achievers aren't so much born as made by parents who back up high expectations with practical support. Many Pacific parents haven't caught up with this, though. They still regard education as the job of teachers and schools, and trust them implicitly to get on with it."

It seems Pacific Islanders historically may have had an idealistic view of the New Zealand school system. "It was assumed that all

we had to do to get educated was to go to school and do what we were told. Like many Pacific Islanders, my parents placed a lot of faith in the education system. And in teachers, too, whose authority they would never have dreamed of questioning."

Sadly the state education system's many inefficiencies transform, it would seem, all but the most gifted teachers' efforts into mediocrity. So as long as the Pacific Islanders' idealism about NZ schools remains, "[t]hey don't see themselves as capable of playing supporting roles, and haven't realised that Pakeha and Asian children succeed because of hours of home teaching, support and extra tuition."<sup>1</sup>

(Continued on page 3: **Parents**)

(Continued from page 1: *Traits*)

tutional environment six hours a day, five days a week. Children can quickly become strangers to their own parents under such forced conditions.

**They are loving towards their pupils.** It isn't all that easy these days with the "me-first" philosophy constantly tugging at parents to abdicate their parenting roles for the corporate ladder or the café culture. But there is no one else on earth more motivated for the individual success of each child than mum and dad. One couldn't pay another to do what mums routinely do in those first two years of life. Home educators are those who are prepared to use the close, intimate knowledge they have of their children, to build upon the foundation of the parent-child bond already established, rather than transfer the child to another site's foundation to be worked upon by strangers.

**They are strong in teaching the core basics.** Parents can excel here, even though they often are caused to feel inadequate. The core basics are the three Rs of basic literacy. Home educating parents who have been living in the

real world know exactly what their children need to know in regards to the basics and will see that they learn it. They have no time for experimental methods or avant-garde philosophies of child development, many of them being the unhappy results of such educational experimentation themselves. Their children master reading because they are taught by phonics, they know their maths facts because they are often earning their own money and need to know how to manage it.

**They are strong in teaching creative dimensions.** Whether tied to a rigid curriculum or not, home educators rarely need to do more than a couple of hours of formal lessons a day. This leaves tons of time for creative instruction by the parents or for following the child's own creative flare. In addition, the home environment virtually requires the child to have a number of regular chores for which he is *responsible*, a characteristic hard to instil in a school.

**They are open to all forms of community interaction for their classes.** Here the home educator excels again with virtually no effort. Mum need only go about her

normal weekly routine with the children in tow to have them exposed to all the important aspects of one's community: visiting various homes, workplaces and the marketplace. What's more, mum can guide her children in being actual participants in the affairs of the community, instead of being mere observers on a field trip or simple listeners to stories of what life is like outside the classroom by someone who comes there to tell them about it.

**They are prepared to model the learning process.** To really be a constant learner, eager to ex-

plore new horizons, ensures a constant refreshing breeze of novelty and discovery. Most home educators do this from day one as they themselves are on a very steep learning curve which never seems to ease up until the third or fourth child passes through the teen years!

**They are prepared to admit their own mistakes.** This is an exceptional quality in a classroom teacher, for it means to risk losing face in front of the classroom full of students as well as their parents and the rest of the teaching staff. Home educators can do this so much easier, not only because the personal risks are minimal, but also because the steps needed to rectify the situation are few and involve only the parent's children.

**They are passionate about being a learner.** Home educators are not facing a new set of 11-year-olds each year, but follow each child right through. That is to say, home education is not a job wherein one can just go through familiar routines: it is a lifestyle of learning that never stops until the last child has left home. In addition, most have found that one of the keys to great learning is to be motivated to learn; and the best way to motivate the learner is for the parents to be excited and motivated themselves!

It is almost by default that home educators hold all the traits of successful teachers. The biggest hurdle for most is the one in the mind which says only highly trained professionals can do this. Well, it takes such a one to manage a classroom, but not so a parent with her children at home! With a belief in their own calling as parents and attitudes of confidence that the tutoring / mentoring situation of home education gives them vast advantages over even the most gifted classroom teacher, home educators are uniquely possessed of all it takes to produce superior students: academically, socially and in terms of character traits.

#### Note:

1. "Kaiako Toa: Highly successful teachers in low decile schools", by Vicki M. Carpenter, Colleen McMurchy-Pilkington, and Sue Sutherland; *set: Research Information for Teachers*, No. 1, 2002. Available from

## 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 mother's teaching.  
— Proverbs 1:8

# Trading Post



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*(Continued from page 1: Parents)*

As always, parents are the movers and shakers. So many parents already tutor their children for hours after school and help with homework, it is amazing they don't just become home educators so at least the credit goes to the right place.

And in Waitara of all places, principal Michael King has instituted an ages-old practice of getting older students to help younger ones, just like they do in home educating families. Waitara High School students listen to year five and six pupils read. Let me repeat that: the IRD collects a lot of money from us all, keeping a cut for their own expenses, to pay for school grounds, buildings, insurance, maintenance, teacher salaries, teacher training, etc., in order for these teachers to send some of the students they are supposed to be teaching to another location, lessening their load; and these students then simply listen to younger students read, occupying students another group of teachers are now freed from teaching; all of the students being required by law to be there, that is, not being paid to perform these tutoring / mentoring activities. Not only do many students' reading levels increase, but it also has a positive effect on children's and tutors' self-esteem and attitudes towards

others. "As soon as they see the high school students coming through the gate, they run to meet them," Mr King said.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that this is a highly beneficial activity to all students concerned for the reasons stated. It does appear, however, to be an activity families can do at home for not even a tiny fraction of what it is costing us in Waitara. Slowly but surely – and at great cost – the educational establishment is discovering that family and home-based instruction is best.

In South Auckland the Mates scheme, run by a partnership of the Pacific Foundation and the University of Auckland, has paired 40 university student-tutors who spend four hours a week with promising young at-risk or underprivileged high-school students who come from poor backgrounds. The results have been "amazing", say administrators and students.

Catherine Scully, who runs the programme at the university, says the high-school students have reported big improvements in their grades, and not one of the paired relationships has failed. In return, the university students receive a "mentoring scholarship" of \$2000 towards tertiary fees.<sup>3</sup>

There could be a big business opportunity for home educated students here; there is certainly the opportunity to start tutoring / mentoring their own younger siblings in order to help home educate them and also gain tutoring experience. I know of several home educated children, aged 15 and under, who are already engaged in tutoring others for profit. Some of those being tutored are friends, some are school children in state classrooms, some are business clients of the tutoring children!

Look at what the teachers' unions all want: smaller class sizes; an extension to the "Parents as First Teachers" initiatives; more opportunity to tailor curriculum to the needs of each individual student;

redefinition of their job to one of a coach or facilitator to allow children to "construct" their own knowledge and meaning from the experiences and situations provided.<sup>4</sup> (Perhaps a pure "constructivist" philosophy would logically lead to students being left entirely free from the guiding biases of any teacher, facilitator, coach or parent. But we'll leave that issue aside for now). There is a steady move toward adopting all those things that home educators already have!

## Notes:

1. "Parents not always to blame for education failures", <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=2847521>
2. "Peer tutoring scheme a class reading act", *New Plymouth Daily News*, 29 August 2002, [www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/dailynews/0,2106,2034911a6554,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/dailynews/0,2106,2034911a6554,00.html)
3. *NZ Herald*, "Mates help high school hopefuls to brighter future", 13 August, 2002, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=2349180>
4. See "Constructivist Learning Design", <http://www.prainbow.com/cld/cldp.html>

## Home is Best

Dr Raymond Moore of the Moore Foundation, Camas, Washington, has been in the forefront of promoting home education for decades. Three research findings he is fond of quoting which show the superiority of home-based education are:

1. One to three hours a day of academics is sufficient. Spend the rest of the day in free-enterprise, manual skills and service to others.
2. Parents respond 100 to 300 times per day compared to one to three responses a day with the teacher in an average classroom.
3. Visiting teachers need only one to three hours a week to keep house-bound students up with the class.

([www.MooreFoundation.com](http://www.MooreFoundation.com),  
Box 1, Camas, WA, 98607, USA;  
Fax: (360) 835-5392)

## Action Needed

The decriminalisation of prostitution would be a disaster for our families. The Prostitution Reform Bill currently before Parliament seeks only to decriminalise. It makes no attempt at regulation. That means if the bill passes into law, male and female prostitution, pimping, soliciting, brothels, etc., all become as legitimate as the corner dairy. Advertising in print, billboards, radio and TV will appear. "Sex workers" can solicit anywhere, anytime including door-to-door and by phone. They will be recruiting young people — including our young people — for the trade, demanding recognition by the NZ Qualifications Authority and setting up apprenticeship schools. (For a critique of the bill see: [www.vision-nz.co.nz/prb3.htm](http://www.vision-nz.co.nz/prb3.htm)).

All research shows such activity to be highly destructive to society. See the Maxim Institute's site for research articles ([www.maxim.org.nz/](http://www.maxim.org.nz/)). While you're at it, write a letter to *every paper in the country* using Maxim's remarkable "letter wizard" ([www.maxim.org.nz/letter/](http://www.maxim.org.nz/letter/)): it even gets you to edit your letter if it has too many words!

Please write to your local MP and members of the Justice & Electoral Select Committee who are considering this Bill. They are to report back to Parliament by the end of November. The committee members are as follows (please note that Mr Barnett will not be the chair as he sponsored the Bill)(address each c/- Parliament Buildings, Wellington; no stamp required):

Tim Barnett (Lab. Christchurch Central) Chairperson of Committee.  
Russell Fairbrother (Lab. Napier)  
Darren Hughes (Lab. Otaki)  
Lynne Pillay (Lab. Waitakere)  
Mita Ririnui (Lab. Wairaki)  
Simon Power (Nat. Rangitikei)  
Richard Worth (Nat. Epsom)  
Stephen Franks (Act. List)  
Murray Smith (United-Future. List)  
Nandor Tanczos/Sue Bradford (Green. List) (These two share one seat on the committee)  
Dail Jones/Peter Brown (NZ First, List)(Also sharing one committee seat).

## Give & Take

British employers are being encouraged to "give an hour" of paid time off to fathers to help their sons with their education under a new government drive launched in August. The "Dads and Sons" programme will target the fathers of 11 to 14-year-olds who are most at risk of under-achievement.

This is part of the government's wider strategy to get parents — and dads in particular — more involved in their children's education. Last April the Department for Education and Skills published research showing 66% of fathers felt work commitments prevented them from being more involved with their children's education.<sup>1</sup>

The plan is obviously working to a degree, for a poll commissioned by British electricity utility Powergen found that 90% of British parents now read to their children, up from only 40% in 2000.<sup>2</sup> It is a bit of a concern, though, when employers are asked to pay via taxation for schooling youngsters at school and then asked to pay again so employees can school them at home.

But this same British government is also planning to hold children at school for up to 10 hours a day, from 8am to 6pm! The first reason put forward is to combat obesity. The normal school day would be followed by sport for two hours and finished off with more studies. The scheme will be piloted in five secondary schools in North London for the next three years, involving over 1,000 11-year-olds.

A Labour MP, Barry Gardiner, smoked up the idea. Downing Street is keen on it and Tony Blair's special adviser on education, Patrick Diamond, has hailed it "an excellent model for modernising the school workforce and ensuring pupils have decent opportunities in sport at school". Yes, of course there is more to it than that. Gardiner said it is "better to have children still in school...than at home watching television, eating crisps and doing

nothing more strenuous than reaching for the remote control, or hanging around in the streets causing trouble". While the British Heart Foundation liked the idea, they said it wasn't enough. Len Almond, director of the BHF's National Centre for Physical Activity and Health at Loughborough University, said: "Schools are only part of the day. What about evenings and weekends? We need to greatly increase the opportunity for children to play in the community through places such as community centres staffed by wardens so parents can leave their offspring there to do activities knowing that they are safe." And the article also mentions a few other odds and sods: such a move should reduce youth crime; produce better exam results; cut the rising levels of misbehaviour, truancy and exclusion; cut the £260 billion cost of childcare; reduce the number of "latch-key kids" at home alone until their parents return from work; and enable more parents, especially mothers, to go back to work as children would be supervised until teatime from the age of eleven.<sup>3</sup>

British children may be reduced to de facto orphans, cut off from their parents for most of their waking hours. Maybe that's the idea. What about those families who actually value their time together to pursue sporting and educational activities? Or are ALL British children obese? Of course, the longer school day may simply force the TV addicts to get in their two to four hours a night at a later time slot, which will be filled with a lot more titillating viewing, I would imagine. We must be constantly vigilant that similar crackpot schemes aren't hatched over here.

### Notes:

1. "Bosses asked to support father and son scheme", *UK Guardian*, 7 August 2002, <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,5500,770753,00.html>
2. "Most parents now read to children", *Dominion*, 27 July 2002, p. B2.
3. School day could rise to 10 hours, *UK Guardian*, 29 Sep-

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## A Mother's Love the Key

A study of 700 teenagers aged 13 to 16 over four years by the school of social sciences at Queensland University found four significant differences between the groups who started offending and those who stayed clean. The offenders had lower levels of self-control, poorer school performance, were more likely to be risk-takers and reported lower levels of affection and support from their mothers. [All four factors can easily be corrected when children are nurtured by their caring parents at home instead of tossed into an institution to be reared by strangers for the next 11 years. — Ed.] The influence of criminally inclined peers was not a significant factor. "It's surprising — mothers are a bigger influence than friends," said lead researcher Dr Abigail Fagan. "This shows the bond to your mother is important all the way through adolescence."

(From *NZ Herald*, 17 September 2002, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=2847452>)

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## Some NCEA Pros & Cons

### Pros

- Students must attend school regularly to pass.<sup>1</sup> (I suppose this is a pro to truancy officers and teachers but not to home educators, except that it may steer some away from what is not yet a viable, worth-while qualification.)
- Students can re-sit if they fail — their total year's success does not hinge on one three-hour exam.<sup>1</sup>
- The same system introduced into Scotland has started to come right.<sup>1</sup>
- PPTA head Jen McCutcheon says a majority of teachers agree in principle with the NCEA and, given proper resources (more money), would be happy for the system to work.<sup>1</sup>
- The National Party has stepped back from its earlier calls to abolish the qualification, and is once again advertising itself as the ar-

chitect of the scheme.<sup>1</sup>

- St Cuthbert's, an independent girls' school in Epsom, is an academic leader which firmly supports the NCEA, finding it more rigorous than School Certificate. Principal Lynda Reid says that generally girls' schools have been more positive about NCEA, perhaps because they are seen as "incubators of innovation". Reid goes on to make it clear that more funding for its implementation must be forthcoming.<sup>2</sup>

### Cons

- After Scotland scrapped national exams in 1998 in favour of standards remarkably similar to our own NCEA, the qualification collapsed in chaos its first year. National Party education spokesman Dr Nick Smith visited Scotland. "The scandal that occurred within the Scottish education system will continue to impact on education in Scotland for the next decade."<sup>1</sup>
- A consortium of schools — 17 in total — have registered to offer Cambridge International Examinations from Britain. Interested schools include Auckland Grammar, Westlake Girls, Macleans College, Corran and Carey College, a small private Christian high school in Panmure which hit the headlines by being the first school to abandon NCEA altogether at the end of June.<sup>1</sup>
- Carey principal Michael Drake pulled few punches in his criticism, calling NCEA "a cumbersome monolith, a vast under-fuelled malfunctioning meat plant with missing parts, confused operators and an obscure instruction manual that is being changed on the hop ... a dumb system that dumbs-down standards and students together, producing a dumb qualification that is as vacuous as its designers."<sup>1</sup>
- NCEA's four bands or grades — not achieved, achieved, merit, excellence — are too wide. "Achieved" covers a huge variation in student ability.<sup>1</sup>
- Once students go on to university, high-school qualifications will be of less importance.<sup>1</sup>
- Students can fail a whole stan-

dard because of one small error, eg, not labelling a graph or not putting a date on their work.<sup>1</sup>

- The system is under-resourced and not responsive enough to problems; chaos is predicted with the introduction of Level 2 in 2003.<sup>1</sup>
- The minister [Trevor Mallard] is being pigheaded to go ahead against the wishes of everyone else, including his own coalition partners. Both United Future and the Progressive Coalition favour deferral.<sup>1</sup>
- ACT Education Spokesman Donna Awatere Huata has said, "Many of New Zealand's best schools are sensibly opting out of NCEA Level Two. But parents are not allowed to send their children to those schools unless they are wealthy enough to live inside the best zones. This is segregation of the worst kind. The Government is forcing poor families to commit their children to the lunatic NCEA experiment. Education and qualifications are the only tickets out of poverty. [Mrs Awatere has succumbed to excessive rhetoric here — home educators and many others know this is a ridiculous statement. — Ed.] But Labour is forcing poor families to accept second-rate, meaningless NCEA certificates without any choice whatsoever."<sup>3</sup>
- The Otahuhu independent school of King's College, catering mainly to boys, has long been one of the top 10 academic schools. But morale has slumped since the NCEA's introduction. Says Head John Taylor, "They don't see why, for example, they should work hard to get 95 per cent when the equivalent of 80 per cent will get them 'achieved with excellence'."<sup>4</sup>
- Boys' schools are vocal critics of the NCEA. Boys like to know where they stand, don't mind competition, and can find a low grade quite a motivating thing. But they don't like the amorphous uncertainty about the NCEA. Head John Taylor says parents "are very worried that what is coming up in NCEA won't have credibility on an international stage," and adds, "we find it anathema to what we believe education is."<sup>4</sup>

"All of this is indeed a terribly sad affair, riddled with naivety, poor advice and questionable competency. Here, again, we have a classic case of imposition from the top — the very method which has been proven time and time again to meet with resistance, scepticism and cynicism. The bureaucratic dictates have again broken all of the rules."<sup>5</sup>

### Notes:

1. Scottish rush to qualifications disaster, *NZ Herald*, 15 August 2002, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=2349512>
2. NCEA allows us to test a range of skills, *NZ Herald*, 15 August 2002, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=2349511>
3. Labour Introduces Segregated Schools, 2 Sept 2002, <http://www.theschooldaily.com/articleView.asp?articlePK=15345>
4. Anathema to an all-round education, *NZ Herald*, 15 August 2002, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=2349510>
5. Lester Flockton, Co-Director, Educational Assessment Research Unit (EARU), University of Otago, Dunedin, 13 September 2002, <http://www.theschooldaily.com/articleView.asp?articlePK=15610>

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## Sex Education

New Zealand has the third-highest rate of teen pregnancies among developed countries.<sup>1</sup> Sexually transmitted diseases are rising rapidly in New Zealand, especially chlamydia and gonorrhoea, with about 70% of all transmitted infections diagnosed in those in late teens or early 20s. New Zealand has much higher rates than other countries, and we lead the OECD in lots of bad statistics such as youth suicide, road traffic accidents and teen pregnancies. Adolescent paediatrician Dr Peter Watson says around half of young people are sexually active by the time they finish school.<sup>2</sup> And let's see; isn't school where they get comprehensive sex, sexuality, "safe sex" and contraceptive education?

So what is the answer? There has been one constant theme from Family Planning Associations and many others who peddle sex education programmes to schools: more comprehensive sex education, starting

earlier, and freer access to safe sex and contraceptive information and supplies.<sup>1</sup>

However, an international review in the *British Medical Journal* looked at 26 trials which evaluate sex education classes and family planning clinics in New Zealand, Australia, North America and Europe. It found that *none* of the international programs delayed sexual activity, improved the use of birth control or reduced pregnancies. Five studies found they *contributed to an increase* in teen pregnancies.<sup>1</sup>

There is really nothing new here. Back in 1994 Barbara Dafoe Whitehead wrote in *The Atlantic Monthly* that there is *no* empirical data to show that comprehensive sex education works; the cold statistics show that it does not work.

But then, maybe comprehensive sex education in schools does work: it produces an effect; the effect appears to be rising rates of teen pregnancies and STDs. Could this have been the objective all along? There are huge (and one would have to say irresponsible) business interests keen on seeing unbridled sexual behaviour: employment opportunities and services such as one-stop youth health shops, counsellors, doctors, nurses, Family Planning Associations, entertainment and entertainers, and all the media industries to first fuel and then feed the demand which has been created; and of course there are consumables to be sold (or paid for by the taxpayer) in the way of condoms, pills, abortions, medications, etc.

According to the Family Research Council in the USA, the basic premise of "safe sex" education programs is that teens cannot control their sexual drive and that sexual activity is inevitable. But surely, training teens to say "no" to drugs and violence, while not saying "no" to sex is inconsistent to say the least; quite irresponsible, really. We are led to believe the only alternative to sex is "safe sex". Generations of healthy people know better. So do the 54% of sexually active teens who say they wish they had waited.<sup>3</sup> Abstinence

is the only strategy for preventing teenage pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases that is 100 percent effective. And home educators can introduce such subjects with all the attendant advantages of privacy, sensitivity, according to the family's values and timing that the one-size-fits-all-run-them-through-the-sheep-dip-whether-they-need-it-or-not approach of the state schools will simply never match.

### Notes:

1. [http://oneweek.nzzoom.com/oneweek\\_detail/0,1227,108624-1-6,00.html](http://oneweek.nzzoom.com/oneweek_detail/0,1227,108624-1-6,00.html), 15 June 2002
2. [http://oneweek.nzzoom.com/oneweek\\_detail/0,1227,85523-1-6,00.html](http://oneweek.nzzoom.com/oneweek_detail/0,1227,85523-1-6,00.html), 7 March 2002
3. Starch, Roper, *Teens Talk About Sex: Adolescent Sexuality in the 90s*, 1994, p. 25.

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## A Real Shop

Children from Lake Tekapo School paid a special visit to their local store last August to celebrate the end of a maths unit on money. Principal Jo DeBono said each of the school's 20 students was allowed to bring one gold coin to spend at the shop. "The unit was about recognising what coins are and what their value is. We thought it would be nice to finish our unit with a visit to a real shop," Mrs DeBono said. The children were allowed to spend their money on anything but lollies.<sup>1</sup>

The article emphasises the fact that schools are artificial environments, separate from the everyday world of reality. Even when they make a foray into the real world, it is again as an artificial group perhaps something like a bus-load of tourists shepherded to a single place, except that the tourists are there voluntarily. It is a safe assumption that the students had all been to a shop before, to that very shop, in fact, for Tekapo has few to choose from, and they're virtually all clustered along the lake side of the highway. The most crucial factors about money — that it is a resource that must be used for present and past commitments, with reference to the needs of others and that responsible stewardship requires a portion to be saved for the future — may have been discussed but was replaced in the end by a license to spurge on

self. The crucial instruction about the use of money was once again left to the parents and / or the trial and error method.

In fact it is mostly the trial and error method, for apparently most parents (unwisely it seems) trust the schools to do the job. A survey conducted only last year by the Enterprise NZ Trust of 804 senior high school students from 68 schools showed that 52% do not have the financial skills to cope with life outside the classroom.<sup>2</sup>

Note that the school was doing only a unit on coins anyway, not the concept of money necessarily. This piece-meal unit approach, referred to as unit standards and achievement standards in high school, is an example of how the administrative and political requirements of schooling dumb down the entire educational process. Donald Treffinger, one of the gurus in America for the education of the gifted, says dumbing down is the process by which minimum standards become all that are strived for. When minimum standards are set, those become the norm, and everyone becomes satisfied with too little, with mediocrity. Perhaps minimum standards were set out of compassion for the underdog, but the consequence is that the education offered by state schools is dumbed down for all.<sup>3</sup>

### Notes:

1. Shopping part of maths for Tekapo children, *Timaru Herald*, 23 August 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2028982a6571,00.html>
2. Students not ready to budget for the real world, *Dominion*, 22 February 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1103,1110572a11,FF.html>
3. The Cooper Column, [www.TheSchoolDaily.com](http://www.TheSchoolDaily.com), 6 August 2001.

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## Tobacco Addiction

A study by Dr. Joseph DiFranza of the University of Massachusetts, done with colleagues at Harvard University and the University of London, sponsored by the National Cancer Institute and published in the September issue of the journal *Tobacco Control*, found that teens who tried cigarettes got hooked within weeks of starting, rather than taking years to become addicted.

The study involved 679 seventh-grade students, aged 12 and 13, who were followed for 30 months and interviewed repeatedly. Of them, 332 tried cigarettes or other forms of tobacco resulting in 40% showing some sign of addiction, even though they were only smoking, on average, two cigarettes a day, one day a week.

It only took an average of three weeks for a girl to become addicted to tobacco, and half of all boys who got hooked were firmly addicted within six months. "Some of these kids were hooked within a few days of starting to smoke," DiFranza said. Adolescents may become addicted more quickly because their brains are still developing. The mechanism seems to be similar to that involved in addiction to drugs such as cocaine or heroin.

Previous research has shown that it takes the average person who starts smoking as a teenager 18 years to break the habit for good.

(From Teens hooked on smoking within weeks of starting, *NZ Herald*, 28 August 2002)

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## Drugs and Booze Regular Part of School Culture

Delegates at September's Post Primary Teachers' Association 50th annual conference in Wellington said they needed help with growing numbers of students coming to school stoned on cannabis or suffering booze hangovers. Morrinsville College teacher Val Thomson said Monday was a "write-off" for many Year 10 to Year 12 students. September's Alcohol Advisory Council's youth drinking monitor showed 82% of youths aged 14 to 17 were consumers with a third of them knocking back five or more glasses of alcohol the last time they drank.<sup>1</sup>

But Hamilton Boys' High Sixth Former Nick Sturgess-Monks says even though students "are getting absolutely shattered" they can still handle school work on Monday.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps not much is done. Perhaps it isn't very challenging.

Hillcrest High School Seventh Former Lucy Smith said most students got drunk at the weekends, but people were overreacting. "Get over it. Honestly this is not that important: it's going to happen so just accept it."<sup>2</sup>

Morrinsville College, Matamata College and Te Aroha College are all doing random sniffer-dog checks. School Trustees Association head Chris France said schools were "desperate to find answers... Substance abuse is a continuing and increasing problem in most schools, and it is getting younger and younger."<sup>3</sup> But the PPTA says parents are being unrealistic if they expect their children's school to be drug-free.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, it's very open: delegates from both North and South Island schools told of secondary students informing their teachers how they would be taking the next two weeks off school for the cannabis harvest.<sup>5</sup> The ERO simply urges more drug education while Alison Dow, Education Ministry curriculum, teaching and learning group manager, said there is some evidence from past drug programmes that it can be counterproductive

Chris France could only sigh: "As always, schools are being asked to be a social agency rather than an educational one."<sup>6</sup> Home educators miss out on this wonderful socialisation: consequently, educators worry we'll be too clear headed and independently minded.

### Notes:

1. Teachers fear for binge-drinking pupils, *Waikato Times*, 30 September 2002, [www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2065559a6004,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2065559a6004,00.html),
2. Students defend drinking, *Waikato Times*, 2 October 2002, [www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2067888a6579,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2067888a6579,00.html),
3. More Schools call in drug dogs, *Dominion Post*, 29 August 2002, [www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/dominion/post/0,2106,2034831a6000,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/dominion/post/0,2106,2034831a6000,00.html)
4. [www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2060921a11,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2060921a11,00.html), 25 September 2002
5. *Dominion Post* and *NZ Herald*, 26 September 2002
6. ERO urges more drug education in schools, *Dominion Post*, 31 August 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/dominion-post/0,2106,2037032a6000,00.html>

# Coming Events

**October 19:**

## Home Education Foundation Workshop Palmerston North

Venue: Harmony House,  
Palmerston North Reformed  
Church, 541 Ruahine St, PNth  
Cost: \$12.00 per person or couple.  
\$10.00 if registered by 17 October 2002 or \$4.00 per session  
Contact: Craig & Barbara Smith,  
ph. (06) 357-4399, hedf@xtra.co.nz

### Programme:

- 09:00 Registration and view resources
- 09:30 Welcome; The Inside Story—ERO's perspective. An insight into the operation of the ERO & highlights from successful home educating families from around New Zealand. Rob Williamson (Senior Review Officer, Home School unit, Education Review Office) with Craig Smith
- 10:30 Morning Tea
- 11:00 3 electives
- \*Home Educating on a Biblical Foundation — Craig
- \*Training our Children's Minds — Barbara
- \*Tour of Dayspring and a look at curriculum materials — Megan McLeay
- 12:30 Lunch - Bring your own - hot drinks provided
- 1:30 3 electives
- \*Getting started - dealing with the MOE/ERO, pulling children out of school, filling in an exemption form — Craig
- \*Home Business — David Waldron
- \*The Tools of Learning and Motivating our Children — Barbara
- 3:00 Afternoon tea
- 3:30 3 electives
- \*Home Educating Through Secondary and Preparing for Tertiary Education and the Workforce — Craig
- \*Having a healthy marriage (for men) — David
- \*Keeping Going When the Going Gets Tough (for women) — Barbara
- 5:00 End of Workshop

**October 19:**

## Whangarei Home Educating Conference

Venue: Kamo Christian College,  
Springs Flat, Kamo, Whangarei.

Cost: \$15 single, \$ 25 Couple,  
\$5 single session, \$25 late registrations after the 4<sup>th</sup> Oct  
Contact: Sharyne Jaunay (09) 437 2725, email sjfamily@igrin.co.nz

### Programme:

- 8.30-8.50 Registrations...collect name tag etc.
- 8.55 Introduction
- 9.00-10.00 Home Educating Experiences. Three Long-Haul Home educators share their experiences; Q&A time: with Christine Ward, Karen Sawford and Carol Munroe.
- 10.00-10.45 Morning tea and resource viewing, buying, chatting, grilling and lots of laughs
- 10.45-11.45 Workshop Session 1
- A. Keeping Going when the going gets tough...Carol Munroe
- B. On Becoming Childwise. Come and hear some practical helps for parents in dealing with the building blocks of development: the four capacities of children: physical, intellectual, emotional and moral... Cindy Cochran
- C. Using Unit Studies as a teaching method...Judith Middleton
- D. Language...Reinforcement activities and games that make practice fun when consolidating basic language skills. Take away instructions to make and play...Sheryn Comrie
- E. The E.R.O and Home Educating. What happens in reviews and Why...Heather Bell
- 11.45-12.30 BRAINSTORMING EXTRAVAGANZA. A chance for Home Educators to share the ideas they have had that have worked for them, gadgets and gizmos, brainwaves and treasured times. We will be dividing into small mixed groups to share and collate our ideas and hopefully present a booklet of ideas as a

resource for everyone. Come prepared to share.

12.30-1.15 Lunch at Last

1.15-2.30 Workshop Session 2

- A. Choosing and using Teaching materials. For the beginner home educator...Carol Munro
- B. Create your learning environment to suit your learning styles. Learn how to recognize and meet the different learning preferences as well as environmental, social, physical and emotional needs. Be prepared to learn by doing and to have fun learning...Ann Neill
- C. Maths skills. Reinforcement activities and games that make practice fun when consolidating basic math skills. Take away instructions to make and play... Sheryn Comrie
- D. What Secondary students need to know in Language Arts and how we go about giving that information...Jan Bryan
- E. Where are you going? Do you need to be going somewhere? An interactive discussion with Todd Roughton on our children's educational goals.
- 2.30-2.45 Afternoon Tea break
- 2:45-4:00 Workshop Session 3
- A. Modern Apprenticeships and Star Courses available at Polytech...Jane Scripp
- B. Taking a child out of school and applying for an exemption... Todd Roughton
- C. Teaching Practical Skills through Craft. It is essential, improves intellect, anyone can teach it and the Basic tools necessary...Wendy Hamilton
- D. Multiple Intelligences and Blooms Taxonomy: An overview of both these models and how to use them to tap individual ability, plan exciting learning, and measure achievement... Ann Neill
- E. Fat City Video (SPELD). Learning difficulties and tips on meeting different needs.
- 4.15-5.15 Discussion Panel. Veteran home educators plus some older children.
- 5.30-onwards Stay on and talk some more around a bring-and-share meal. A good time for dads to talk to other dads. If you want to stay come prepared.



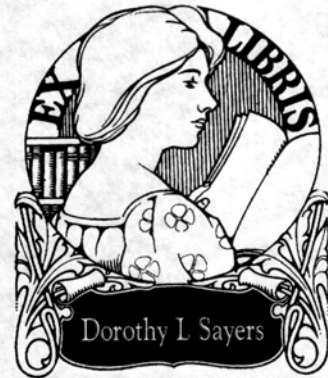
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