

Statistics of Shame

Two major international surveys compiled by Unicef (the United Nations Children's Fund) recently gave NZ schools reason to weep. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), awarded New Zealand children very high marks in reading and scientific literacy and placed them third overall in the OECD behind Korea and Japan. But the other survey, called Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS), revealed that 42 per cent of New Zealand 14-year-olds gave the wrong answer when asked to subtract 4078 from 7003, compared with 14 per cent in Japan and 12 per cent in Korea. If nearly half of New Zealand students can't do a simple subtraction problem, how is it that they seem to score so well in "scientific literacy" in the PISA survey?

It could well be that much of the competition isn't doing well either, making NZ look reasonable by comparison. New Zealand, along with Canada, the United States and the UK, has an illiteracy rate among its 16 to 25-year-olds running at 10 per cent or more. For industrialised countries supposedly leading the world, these figures are of concern. In addition, New Zealand's lowest school achievers are roughly five years behind high achievers of the same age. The gap in achievement between New Zealand's bottom students and its average students is the second widest across all OECD countries; only Belgium's system shows a greater gap.

Here's how they rated (effective education ranking of 14- and 15-year-olds' levels in literacy, maths and science): 1. South Korea; 2. Japan; 3. Finland; 4. Canada; 5.

Australia; 6. Austria; 7. Britain; 8. Ireland; 9. Sweden; 10. Czech Republic and New Zealand.¹

A lot could be made of the fact that Japan and Korea have very homogeneous populations in regards to ethnic and religious diversity, whereas NZ has large numbers of immigrants who don't handle English that well and who have cultural backgrounds that don't tend to value Western-style academic education as highly. Even so there are other issues which came out in the surveys which home educators can use to advantage.

Korea's continual high ranking

has been chalked up to high standards of in-service teacher training, a relatively long, 220-day school year (New Zealand's is roughly 190 full-days) and to the passionate attitudes of both parents and students towards education. Not surprisingly, home educators are doing the equivalent of all these things. In service training: home educators are finding that the most important reading is that of the parents, rather than that of the students, that the parents themselves read widely for their own interests. Home educators already have their students with them 24/7, far better than even a 220-day school year. HE parents are obviously more motivated than most about education. In addition, one of the great advantages and objectives of home education

(Continued on page 2: Shame)

Government Backs Gifted Children

At the end of November Education Minister Trevor Mallard announced a \$1.2 million handout to 17 educational programmes targeting gifted and talented students. Some of these programmes cater for distance learning over the internet, which means there may be openings for home educated individuals. The programmes are run by national and regional organisations as well as by some schools.

Mr Mallard expressed his opinion that such children will be New Zealand's future leaders. He also said, "It's important to remember that gifted and talented learners have needs that are significantly different from those of other children. They require different learning opportunities and may need special emotional and social sup-

port to realise their potential."

All of the programmes being funded by the government will provide opportunities for these learners to interact with others with similar abilities.

Since each school is run by its own Board of Trustees, any Home Educators wanting to enrol in any of these programmes will need to make a direct approach to the institution involved.

Whangarei *Future Problem Solving NZ*: A programme for meeting the needs of highly creative gifted students. It includes an online component and support for Community Problem Solving in a cluster of six Northland schools. Contact: Robyn Boswell

(Continued on page 4: Gifted)

(Continued from page 1: *Shame*)

is lighting that fire of curiosity within the children / students rather than just filling their heads for exams or their workbooks for auditors.

Spending on students does not appear to be a factor. Korea, at the top of the table, spends as much per student as Greece and Portugal, at the bottom. The income of the families involved is also unrelated to these academic outcomes. These same things have also been observed time and again in American studies among home educators.

One thing is really puzzling. Korea has the highest pupil-teacher ratio in the OECD at 23 students to each teacher; New Zealand has around 16 to each teacher. With this great advantage, why is NZ still so low?

NZ's Maxim Institute says it is because Korea and Japan have not abandoned a syllabus, a document clearly stating content in detail and in clearly defined steps.² NZ meanwhile has gone to using broad curriculum statements combined with a constructivist style where students cobble together their own body of knowledge, their own learning, with guidance rather than authoritative instruction in what they must learn.

The Asian countries still go for rote learning, while NZ's curriculum lacks detail about exactly what to learn. The philosophical question as to whether there is a body of knowledge out there which all students need to learn is one home educators seem to have answered, "Yes," even though they then approach that body of knowledge as learners in a number of very different ways.

A contributing reason for NZ's poor showing in these surveys is that the state schools' position on this question is no longer an unqualified "Yes," because the building of relationships and the inculcating of values – socialisation – has taken precedence.

This emphasis on socialisation has been growing over the years and has some major implications. Sir Neil Waters, past Vice-Chancellor of Massey University and then NZ Qualifications Authority Board Chairman, said the following in an interview in the NZQA's magazine *LEARN*, Issue 10, November 1996, p. 8 (hold onto your hats; this is a real doozy):

"If you ask what schools are for the obvious answer is to educate kids, but there's an equally important answer. And that is to socialise them, to bring them up to be comfortable in adult society and I think this has always been a feature of the education process, otherwise it wouldn't take so long. You don't need 15 years to educate somebody but you need 15 years to socialise somebody. I think we should use the schools for the socialising role and we should somehow or other try to separate the educational role from that so that as a pupil you were in the class with every other 14 year old but you might be doing maths with adults and Japanese language

with 10 year-olds or whatever. So everybody learnt at an individual pace but you were socialised at a chronological pace." (Please forgive the punctuation of this paragraph: it is exactly as it appears in the magazine.)

Let us note a number of things:

1. Sir Neil says quite clearly that socialization is equally as important as education.
2. This has always been part of the "education process", i.e., state schooling.
3. Compulsory schooling lasts for as long as it does because of the need to socialize the children, not to academically educate them.
4. Academic education is best learned at an individual pace with others of various age levels.
5. Socialisation should take place in the peer group.
6. Schools should be used for the socializing role.

These things reveal very clearly (to this writer at any rate) why state schools do so poorly and why home education does so well....and why those who do well in the state schools generally have highly motivated and supportive parents who have a focus on academics.

Out of Sync

The Principal of Rangitikei College, Keith Scott, made some very revealing remarks at his school's prizegiving in November. Mr Scott said he was concerned schools were being seen as the solution to all the problems that have been created by societal tensions. "We are not trained psychologists, dealing with personal student issues, yet our senior staff spend a disproportionate amount of time trying to deal with profound personal problems of our students."

Schools were expected to teach a huge range of peripheral topics that used to be taught in the family context, such as traffic, alcohol and drug and sex education, he said. "Every group with a cause wants schools to undertake the teaching or instruction of passing 'fads' . . . The school curriculum is over-crowded now, without any more dumping of

(Continued on page 3: *Shame*)

TEACH Bulletin

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Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
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— Proverbs 1:8

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Contact:

Barbara
Ph: (06)357-4399
craig.barbara.smith@xtra.co.nz

(Continued from page 2: *Shame*)

topics/subjects by trendy, transitory politicians or do-gooders with a cause." Mr Scott reckoned schools needed to focus on the core tasks of teaching the curriculum, meeting learning needs and developing competency in literacy, numeracy, thinking and research.³

Mr Scott is clearly out of sync with the school system that employs him. Undoubtedly his comments would have received a lot of nods from the gathered parents, many of whom still believe the primary purpose of schools is to impart a quality academic education. But he was complaining about the way schools are apparently meant to be, about the way they have purposefully developed. Schools are institutions of social engineering. We see that in Sir Neil's comments above and even more clearly in former PPTA head Philip Capper's statement: "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."⁴ Schools are strengthening their positions as institutions of social engineering via the understandable trend for parents to progressively abdicate more and more of their parental responsibilities to the institutions which compulsorily take charge of their children for the bulk of each week, leaving parents to find something else to do with themselves.

"Schools are social instruments designed to bring about the attainment of extrinsic goals which lie outside of and beyond the schools themselves. For our purposes, four functions of schooling can be identified. One of the clearest functions of schooling apparent from the first day parents leave their children at the school gate is the role of the school as a baby-sitting agency.... [Another] thing schools set out to do is socialize young children into a set of moral values and cultural practices....[T]he task...is made all the more problematic because of a

lack of agreement over what sorts of values and beliefs ought to be inculcated.”⁵

The role of the school as an institution of social engineering is undeniable and raises many concerns, especially as it seems to be eclipsing the role of imparting a quality academic education. Home educators have often seen these concerns much more clearly than others, which is one of the reasons why they now educate their children at home.

Plenty of other teachers feel the same frustration as Mr Scott does and are voting with their feet, leaving even more room in the timetables for special interest speakers, rather than proper teachers of maths, grammar, sciences, etc. Northland MP John Carter made a brief media splash when he said small schools such as Broadwood battled to attract competent staff and had to accept what was on offer.⁶

Although Mr Carter was referring to the lurid track record of sexual advances and liaisons between staff and pupils at the school, other teachers say the worst is yet to come. A Waikato Principal, Ric Drake of Huntly College, says his school is so hard to staff, teachers are lured there by an extra payment of \$2,500 in addition to their normal salary. Secondary schools could be up to 370 teachers short at the start of next year, according to the Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA). Ministry predictions show there will be another 20,920 students by 2006, meaning another 747 teachers will be needed, based on one teacher per 28 students.⁷

Mr Scott does see things rather clearly, for he made a comment which was perhaps his way of encouraging parents to consider the home education option: “The future of our community and the responsibility for the upbringing of our young people rests firmly with families.” Amen, Mr Scott! Amen!

Notes:

1. *NZ Herald*, Education surveys show our statistic of shame, 27 Nov 2002, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=3006427>

2. Maxim Institute Real Issues — No. 44, 28 Nov 2002, www.maxim.org.nz
3. *Evening Standard*, Schools won't cure social ills, 19 Nov 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/eveningstandard/0,2106,2115685a6502,00.html>
4. *Dominion Sunday Times*, 14 October 1990.
5. Dr John Clark, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy of Education in the Department of Policy Studies in Education, Massey University; course notes for Understanding Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1997. The next two functions are: preparing children for the world of work and the promise of upward social mobility coupled with the reality of cultural and class reproduction.
6. *NZ Herald*, School in fresh teacher-pupil sex claims, 12 Nov 2002, (<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=3003859>)
7. *Waikato Times*, Worst yet to come: principal, 28 Nov 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/in1/print/0,1478,2124774a6579,00.html>

(Continued from page 1: *Gifted*)
fps@ihug.co.nz, Ph:(09)438-9377.

Auckland George Parkyn National Centre for Gifted Education: Development of a website for rural gifted students from years 2-8 and scholarships for a limited number of gifted students to attend the George Parkyn National Centre for Gifted Education one-day schools. Contact: Rosemary Cathcart, giftedednz@xtra.co.nz, Ph: (09) 376-3235.

Gifted Kids Programme: Professional development for teachers who have students going to the Gifted Kids Programme one-day schools so that the students' needs can be met in the regular classroom. Contact: Christine Fernyhough, admin@giftedkids.co.nz Ph: (027) 442-2225.

Gladstone Primary School: Extension of an existing programme to investigate how to best meet the needs of gifted underachievers and gifted students with learning

disabilities / difficulties in years 1-6. This programme involves specialist modules and mentoring. Contact: Emma Best, emma@gladstone.school.nz, Ph: (09) 846-9744.

Waikato Programme to meet the needs of gifted Māori students in kura kaupapa Māori. (No contact details at present.)

Hamilton Boys' High School Virtual Classroom: Development of a virtual classroom and holiday camp for gifted year 8-9 boys in rural Waikato schools. Contact: Susan Hassall, headmaster@hbhs.school.nz, Ph: (07) 855-2099.

Turanga and Gisborne Tairawhiti REAP: Programme for meeting the needs of gifted students in the Turanga/Gisborne area. This involves a cluster of 10 primary schools. Contact: Judi Rendall, judi.eastreap@xtra.co.nz, Ph: (06) 867-4187.

Wanganui Wanganui West Schools Cluster: Development of an electronic academy and immersion days to meet the needs of gifted students in rural Wanganui schools. Contact: Mervyn Bloor, principal@brunswick.school.nz, Ph: (06) 342-1841.

Palmerston North Massey University College of Sciences: Development of a mentoring programme in science for year 11-13 gifted girls with potential talent in the sciences. Contact: John Holland, j.d.holland@massey.ac.nz, Ph: (06) 350-5565.

Christchurch Aranui High School: Programme for meeting the needs of gifted Māori students in secondary school. This involves student and parent hui, counselling, mentorships, courses, visits to local tertiary providers, guest speakers and role models based on needs. Contact: Graeme Pollock, principal@aranui-high.school.nz, Ph: (03) 388-7083.

Halswell School: Development of a programme for year 6-8 gifted students with potential talent in science, includes links with a local high school and university. Contact: David Clayton, halswell.admin@xtra.co.nz, Ph: (03) 322-7038.

Ilam School: Extension of an existing programme to investigate how

to best meet the needs of highly gifted students in years 1-6. This programme involves inquiry based learning and links with the local university. Contact: Lyn Atkinson, lyn.atkinson@ilam.school.nz, Ph: (03) 348-7492.

NZ Chemistry Olympiad: Extension of an existing programme to include differentiated extension material for gifted year 12-13 students with potential talent in Chemistry. This programme involves an international competition and training camps. Contact: Dr Robert Maclagan, r.maclagan@chem.canterbury.ac.nz, Ph: (03)364-2456.

NZ Mathematical Enrichment Trust: Extension of an existing programme to investigate how to best meet the needs of gifted students with potential talent in mathematics. This programme involves an international competition, correspondence extension material, university links and training camps. Contact: Alan Parris, pa@linwoodcollege.school.nz, Ph: (03) 389-2039 ext. 809.

Sirius Programme: Extension of an existing programme involving cluster days for students from 20 North Canterbury schools to include online materials for teachers, students and parents. Contact: Rod Thompson, southbrook.school@xtra.co.nz, Ph: (03) 313-8792.

Timaru Timaru Boys' High School: Programme to meet the needs of gifted boys at secondary school who are exceptionally gifted, highly creative, underachieving or have learning difficulties. This programme includes mentoring, student workshops, counselling and Future Problem Solving. Contact: Nick Simpson, tbhs@timaruboysschool.nz, Ph: (03) 688-8588.

Dunedin Music Heartland Programme: Programme for developing musical talent in gifted students from age 9-13 in Otago schools. Contact: Errol Moore, ejm@dce.ac.nz, Ph: (03) 479-3809.

(From TheSchoolDaily.com, Government backs gifted and talented children, 29 Nov 2002, <http://www.theschooldaily.com/articleView.asp?articlePK=17298>)

What's the Use?

More than two-thirds of the 2600 full-time secondary school correspondence students are considered at-risk. It is not just because many of them were kicked out of school, but also because they are not proving to be any more self-disciplined in completing Correspondence Lessons than they were in doing classroom work.

Now the Government is looking at forcing schools to take these students back on board. It must inevitably impact on the educational opportunities of ordinary students, now forced to share a classroom with youngsters who have no interest in being there and are simply a disruptive influence.¹

So what do all these students get if they do manage to peacefully co-exist and stick it out? We know they will get socialised, but it is an open question as to what value system they will get socialised into. (See lead article, "Statistics of Shame", page 1).

How about the basics, the 3Rs?

Here is a review of the current English curriculum from *The Crisis in NZ Schools* by Martin Hames:

Chapter 7 – Mediocrity Rules: "The first shock on reading the English curriculum is the poor quality of the English. In a document which should presumably be a showcase of the language, the writing is inelegant, vague, and so soporific that it should be on the bedside table of every insomniac in the country. When all due allowance is made for the difficulties involved in drafting by a committee, the irony still seems rich.

"Readers do not need to take this writer's word for it. The principal author of the Education Forum critique of the draft curriculum was Karl Stead – novelist, poet, critic, and Emeritus Professor of English at Auckland University. Stead found the document 'in many places quite extraordinarily difficult to read – unclear, unspecific, abstract – quite the reverse of what one would expect from a document drawn up by people

whose subject is English'.²

"This is from a writer recently described in the British literary press as 'among the very best contemporary novelists'.³

"The contents are no better than the style. Not surprisingly, the curriculum bears all the marks of 'child-centred' education, with the teacher relegated to something akin to a facilitator in a group-therapy session. Everything is about students somehow learning; little is about teachers actually teaching. Teachers 'share' things with the class.

"Students 'explore' things with the teacher or with each other. They discuss things endlessly. They are constantly choosing for themselves. They work frequently in groups. In one suggested activity, they even appear to write a poem as a group.⁴ Amid this orgy of sharing, exploring and choosing, any suggestion that the teacher is better placed than the child or has a body of knowledge which, if students attended to, they might find useful or stimulating, is largely absent."

Ok, but let's say these once-kicked-out-of-school children still manage to hang in there and do reasonably well. What kind of assessments are they likely to have? Well, first, they need to make sure they don't sit the wrong exams, like those poor souls at Hornby High in Christchurch.⁵ Then they need to hope that the NZQA gets its computer software glitches sorted out so they actually end up with any marks at all.⁶ Actually, if the student sticks out the year, he may be on his own, for many teachers will be hard pressed to stick it out. PPTA President Jen McCutcheon candidly says implementation of the new NCEA qualification at Level 1 has been close to a disaster this year.⁷ Marlborough Girls' College principal Greta Firth said teachers were "hysterical" after problems with entering marks with the NZQA's software had seen data "scrambled" three times.⁶

Those who educate their children at home do so for a great variety of reasons. They are gaining more reasons all the time.

(Continued on page 6: NCEA)

Coming Events

22 February 2003

Tauranga Home Schoolers Workshop

Venue: Mount Baptist Church, Tui Street, off Maunganui Road just past the Mount College.

Cost: \$15.00/day or \$5.00/session. Arrive 15 minutes early if you are going to pay on the day.

Contact: Ph: Jenny (07) 578-1904, email: jenkinsfamily@e3.net.nz

Programme

9:30-10:30 Keeping Going When the Going Gets Tough — Craig and Barbara Smith

10:30-11:00 Morning tea.

11:00-12:30 2 Electives:

** Home Education: Getting things into perspective -- What's it all about; Schooling verses education; parents qualifications; Tutoring/Mentoring; Where is this going: developing vision — Craig Smith

** Training Our Children's Minds/ The Tools of Learning/ Motivating our children — Barbara Smith

12:30-13:30 Lunch Time. Talking freely with people, displays etc.

1 till 1:20 There will be a sales table for people to sell their unneeded resources — label with price

13:30-15:00 2 Electives:

**Home Educating Through Secondary and Preparing For Tertiary Education and the Workforce — Craig and Barbara Smith

**Training your Children to Obey- Parenting from a Christian Perspective — Jenny Jenkins

15:00-15:30 Afternoon tea

15:30-16:30 2 Electives

**Question and answer session — With Craig Smith, Jenny Jenkins, Margaret Hartnett and Gail Brockett

**Training our Children and Youth in Purity — Barbara Smith

Break

7:30-9:00 Separate meeting for Christian Home Educators at 44 Puwhariki Road, Matapihi. No charge. "Fathers Role and a Vision for the Future" — Craig Smith

4, 5 & 6 April 2003

Christchurch Home Education Conference

More details to follow.

Contact: CHEInc@free.net.nz

25-27 July 2003

The Annual Heart Retreat for Homeschooling Mothers

Venue: Matamata Totara Springs

Cost: To be confirmed

Contact: Sue Abernethy, abernethy.clan@xtra.co.nz or Chris Bovil, Ph: (07) 883-2771.

Come and enjoy a weekend of refreshment, encouragement and nourishment for your body and soul.

(Continued from page 5: NCEA)

Notes:

1. *Manawatu Evening Standard*, Editorial, Get real on educating at-risk kids, 21 Sept 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2057337a6504,00.html>
2. Education Forum, April 1994, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum: A Submission on the Draft*, p 21. (Prepared with the assistance of Karl Stead.)
3. de Falbe, John, 27 May 2000, Talking About C.K. Stead, *The Spectator*, p 39.
4. Ministry of Education, 1994a, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, Wellington, Learning Media, p. 102.
5. TheSchoolDaily.com, 29 Nov 2002, Kids sit the wrong NCEA exam, <http://www.theschooldaily.com/articleView.asp?articlePK=17319>
6. Marlborough Express, Teachers bugged by more NCEA problems, 5 Nov 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2101970a6008,00.html>
7. Maxim Institute Real Issues, No. 41, 7 Nov 2002, www.maxim.org.nz.

Airport Noise Damages Reading and Speech

Gary Evans at Cornell University, New York, and colleagues monitored reading, memory, attention and speech perception in schoolchildren before and after the opening of the new international airport in the city of Munich and the simultaneous closure of the city's old airport.

Children aged between 8 and 12 and living near the airport sites were monitored six months before the airport switch, and one and two years afterwards. Two control groups were also assessed, making a total of 326 children. At the end of the 30-month period, long-term memory, reading and speech perception had been impaired in the children newly-exposed to noise near the new airport. The reading and memory deficits in this group were more pronounced two years after the opening of the new airport than after one year, suggesting a cumulative effect.

But the reading and long-term memory of the children living near the old airport site improved, although their speech perception deficits among this group did not recover.

(From NewScientist.com 18 Oct 2002, Airport noise damages children's reading.)

Home Education is Colour Blind

Baltimore City Community College professor Arnita Hicks McArthur found that not only are 500 of the city's 1,200 home educated children black, but they home educate for the same reasons as whites. "All parents just want the best for their children. And when they're not getting it, they can take education into their own hands."

Black parents, like whites, deplore poor discipline and violence in the public schools and believe they can do a better job meeting their children's needs. Many believe a spiritual foundation should be central to education.

(From WorldNetDaily.com, 26 Nov 2002, http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=29779)

Coming Events

January/February the Hogans are considering a tour of New Zealand. South Auckland will probably have them at a workshop at the end of January or beginning of February. They will only be in New Zealand for approx. two weeks. So possibly Auckland, Palmerston North or Wellington then Christchurch. You can check out their web site www.BrightIdeasPress.com <<http://www.BrightIdeasPress.com>> to see their stuff.

February 21 Tau-ranga

North Shore has usually had a workshop in April/May each year but did not last year. There have been lots of discussions going on about them doing one this year in this period of time. It would depend on when a speaker was available. They are considering possibly March or June. But more seriously looking at March as it is colder in the rooms in June.

April 26 THEN (Hamilton) Home Educating Conference

25-27 July HEART CAMP in Totara Springs - Matamata
Above Rubies has a family camp in Auckland August/September with Colin and Nancy Campbell - somewhere there.
Jonathan Lindvall is looking to do a tour of New Zealand later this year and the North Shore is seriously considering organising this for Auckland. He too would possibly be only available for a couple of weeks so would spread his meetings out over the country.
<http://www.BoldChristianLiving.com>
<<http://www.BoldChristianLiving.com>>

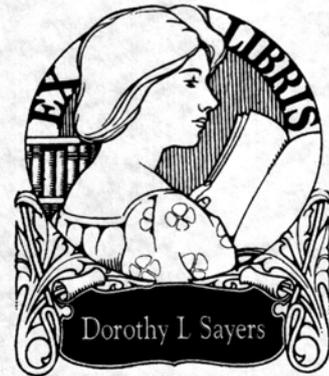
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by Craig S. Smith

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Enclosed find my cheque/money order (payable to Home Education Foundation) for \$ _____

OR Please charge my MasterCard Visa Bankcard

_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|

Expiry date/..... Amount: \$.....

Name on card.....

Signature.....

* All prices include post and packaging.

Post/email/fax completed order form to:

Home Education Foundation

Freepost 135611

PO Box 9064

Palmerston North

Ph.: (06) 357-4399

Fax: (06) 357-4389

hedf@xtra.co.nz