

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 90

March 2005

NZ Principal Speaks Out

I've been reading *What's Up with Our Schools?* by Allan Peachey, the Principal of Rangitoto College, the nation's largest with 3,000 students and among the very top academically as well. Wow! This man's commitment to excellence, his sense of personal responsibility, his intolerance of political correctness and government officials who live in ivory towers almost gets me excited about the kind of school he runs...almost. The necessary politics and frustration of working with government officials driven by ideological agendas totally detached from reality and of dealing with the aftermath of teaching personnel who are below par resonates and reminds me too often of the same kinds of things home educators have faced over and over.

Many times he identifies keys to his success which home educators know and understand: "There was nothing flash about my start in life, but one thing shaped it. That was having parents who...gave me every encouragement to be the best that I could possibly be. You didn't have to be rich to do that, you just had to be decent parents. When I was little they read books to me...They taught me good manners and to respect my elders. At night they tested my times tables and spelling lists." "When I was a student, my best teachers shared with me a huge amount of knowledge but, unlike today's youngsters, I was not swamped; I had a set of values in which to place it. I was not left confused about values. The truth was the truth and you told it." "The best teachers I know are also some of the most selfless people I know." "Top teachers are the type of people who

not only expect a lot from their students but also have even higher expectations of themselves."

This kind of wisdom is what old buzzards like me were raised up to refer to as "common sense." But Mr Peachey is moved to say that "basic common sense...is not a commodity that exists in abundance in our highly politicised, bureaucratic and union-dominated system...I cannot be bothered with the system. To me it is dishonest, full of winks and nods,

and the right tick in the right box is seen as more important than whether students are learning (or not)."

Mr Peachey has found plenty to criticise within the system (much of it harmonising with what we home educators have been saying on the email lists for ages about power and control): "The Ministry of Education and ERO collectively control New Zealand education in a way that would do the old Soviet Union proud. They seek to micro-manage everything to the final degree and, in doing so, are squeezing the last ounce of innovation and initiative out of schools, principals and teachers... Too many review officers are more concerned with political correctness than they are with how

Update on German Persecution of HEs

My feeling is that a renaissance of the family is around the corner. — Horst Koehler (new German President) in his inauguration speech in the German Parliament, 1 July 2004.

Reply by Richard Guenther, Director of Germany's home education organisation, *Schulunterricht zu Hause* 26 March 2005:

We must remember that these are secular humanists in control so what in their opinion does "family renaissance" mean?

Today's philosophy defines family as a group of people who love each other. All indications and what is being presented to the children in our schools is that this renaissance is not about reviving the family but the birth of a secular family as defined above.

This man said this in July 2004. It is interesting to note that in the past six months our educators have greatly increased teaching the acceptance of homosexuality and families to include two men or two women as parents.

Parents who disagree and try to protect their children from being taught this by asking that they either be exempted from these classes or remove the children from school altogether are being castigated. Especially Christian parents! Education officials state publicly that religion cannot be used as a reason to protest what is being taught in the schools, and that parents have no say whatsoever in the curricular content.

What's around the corner is the acceptance of the redefinition of Family. What makes it particu-

(Continued on page 3: Persecution)

well students are learning or how well teachers are teaching...ERO is allowing many of its reviewers to judge schools, principals and teachers against their own particular views of how things should be... Much of what is written and said by review officers reflects the personal views of the reviewers and their own agendas and hobby horses."

Mr Peachey outlines his belief that political correctness breeds its own brand of intolerance and how this is often directed at parents! At one point he derides those "whose ideology would not let them believe that parents might know what is best for their children." "The politics of political correctness are playing too big a role in our schools. Single-issue activists seem to have an influence well beyond either the merit of their ideas or the level of support for them...It is ironic that these activists — who promote sweeping social change — are arguing for tolerance, yet they are not tolerant of people who hold more orthodox or traditional views. We are seeing political correctness made into law and there is a politically correct, sanctioned intolerance being built into our education system." He goes on to say that "political correctness

is being used to undermine traditional family values...There is a desperate need for society to be investing not in political correctness and the promotion of alternative lifestyles, but in homes and in marriage."

"Perhaps the most insulting of all," says Mr Peachey in regards to those who worked to tear down the reforms of Lange's Tomorrow's Schools, "was the patsy, middle-class patronising of the less well-off communities by those who call themselves liberals. It is not difficult for me to hold the 'Chardonnay socialists' in contempt. I was stunned by the sheer arrogance of those who claimed that some communities were too poor, too unskilled or too uneducated to know what was best for their children. I think one of the lessons of the decade of Tomorrow's Schools was that communities did know better than bureaucrats and unionists about the capabilities and aspirations of their children...I get sick of hearing schoolteachers, principals, trade unionists, capital-city bureaucrats and left-wing politicians using the socio-economic status of communities as an excuse to expect less of children within those communities than those children expect of themselves."

One of the keys of success Mr Peachey used himself but only mentions briefly in passing is the need for continuing personal study and self-improvement. He clearly did not develop this kind of thinking in the system in which he is immersed every day.

"Sometimes I yearned for a decent teacher in my classes. Indeed, that continued through university and, perhaps most disturbingly of all, while I was at teacher-training college...I have little or no confidence in the way teachers are recruited and trained...There is no evidence of trainees being failed if they

don't reach required standards and, frankly, there is no evidence that people with the qualities that I require in teachers actually benefit from teacher training. Millions of dollars are tied up in buildings, further millions are paid in salaries each year, and most of it could be better used elsewhere. Too much teacher training introduces bright-eyed graduates to the worlds of political correctness and institutionalised mediocrity."

While Mr Peachey's comments are hard to dismiss — he not only has over a quarter century of experience in the system, he is also totally committed to state schooling — he at times comes across as an evangelist for AMWAY: "The glass will always be half full, never half empty. Get the right principal and anything will be possible."

Nevertheless, his combination of non-compromise with high standards and old-fashioned wisdom obviously give him the edge and bring out the best in students. He demands correct and tidy uniforms (and that nobody pretends they don't see infractions), obedience from students at first request and with a smile on their faces. "Swear within earshot of a teacher, and you have sworn at the teacher," which brings swift retribution. "My students cannot appoint their own teachers; they are totally dependent upon me to get it right." "If we could raise the standards of teachers' dress and grooming in a lot of our schools we would get an immediate improvement in respect from students...And that would be accompanied by an improvement in behaviour." I reckon we home educating parents can learn from these kinds of attitudes.

Sometimes he simply sounds like one of us: "There is no standardised child and the best can only be got out of children when they are known as individuals and have their differing talents encouraged." He reckons children can take on subjects earlier than we give them credit for and are wanting the challenge: "Too often, I think, schools fail because school leaders and teachers have expectations of students that fall below those students' own levels of self-esteem." Amen!

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. TEACH Bulletin is available for a subscription of \$16 per year for 11 issues (none in December) or two years for \$30.

All correspondence to:
The Editor, Craig S. Smith
PO Box 9064
Palmerston North
New Zealand
Ph.: (06) 357-4399
Fax: (06) 357-4389
mail@hef.org.nz
www.hef.org.nz

Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and reject not your mother's teaching.
— Proverbs 1:8

(Continued from page 1: Persecution)
larily difficult is that the people have been too long indoctrinated to accept the counsel of the “experts”, whether in education or government. Almost everyone thinks that they themselves are independent in their thinking, unaware that they have been indoctrinated to think in a certain way. This is evident because the vast majority have an identical secular world view.

And now the Guenthers (Richard and Ingrid) have been charged with contributing to the delinquency of a truant and are being fined over US \$1,500 simply because they have been going to Paderborn on a number of occasions to mediate with the authorities on behalf of the seven homeschool families there. Mr Guenther is the director of the School Instruction At Home organization (Schulunterricht zu Hause), which provides legal defense for German homeschoolers. It is unconscionable that the authorities prosecute individuals who are trying to mediate and resolve conflicts.

“No” to Parallel Societies

But the German officials do not seem to major on logic or to value freedom of expression. The German embassy in Washington, D.C., has become a target for American home educators to express their views via emails. Incredibly, the embassy has replied to a number of people saying in part that home education should not be legal because “The public has a legitimate interest in countering the rise of parallel societies that are based on religion or motivated by different world views and in integrating minorities into the population as a whole.” This statement is incompatible with a free nation.

This is not an isolated comment. Heinz Kohler, the Paderborn county education director, has also dismissed the families’ beliefs, stating, “you and your children are not living in isolation on some island but rather in an environment posing intra- and extracurricular situations where you’ll have to accept that your world view will be curtailed.” Mr. Kohler further explained that homeschooling could not be allowed as “children should not be encapsulated or kept apart from the

outside world. In these cases, the parents’ rights to personally educate their children would prevent the children from growing up to be responsible individuals within society...”

Richard Guenther made additional comments on 14 March:

Things here are presently at a boiling point. This Friday (18 March) the largest radio station in Germany will host a panel discussion regarding the situation. Panelist from the state will include a psychologist whose position is that if the parents do not send their children to school then, for the health and welfare of the children, they should be taken away from the parents. All research that I have seen points away from this position. Our organization (Schulunterricht zu Hause) will represent the Paderborn families (home educators) in this discussion.

We were told privately by a government insider that the huge volume of emails, faxes and telephone contacts Germany has received regarding the Paderborn situation is unprecedented. It has caused much concern. They must take these families seriously and not push them aside as they would normally do. That it has come all the way to a public discussion is an astonishing achievement. The government in this case is not being allowed to hide their dirty deeds but they are being laid bare.

Two fathers in Nordrheinwestfalen are scheduled to go to jail for not allowing their children to participate in the school’s field trips. I give a few examples of what happens on these field trips in a radio interview I did with Bob Enyart out of Denver: www.kgov.com. (Go to this website and scroll down to “German Schools Sexually Abusing Kids”. Richard mentions that in Germany a recent official document claimed that “the sexual freedom proclaimed by the schools has a broad consensus in society” and that this claimed consensus overrides parental concerns every time...that is, parents are not allowed to have

children exempted from any class for any reason. The local school has total control of the curriculum, parents have no say at all and there isn’t even a blueprint of where the curriculum is going. What he described was too gross to record here, and the American interviewer said that kind of thing would be considered institutionalised sexual abuse in the USA.)

Harrassing Even the Helpers

Last Saturday my wife received a letter of complaint filed against her by a teacher and a school principal. We knew this was coming because several papers have been reporting it. This complaint was filed in the state of Nordrheinwestfalen. Can you imagine? Teachers are devastated because their good names are being questioned. They accuse Ingrid personally of smearing their names. When in truth, no names were ever mentioned and Ingrid only reported what parents were telling us was happening in their schools. These poor teachers are claiming that they must seek psychiatric help in their now demoralized state! Listen, these teachers can use their health insurance to cover the costs of mental health. But how about the parents whose children have been devastated? And how about the children themselves who are being destroyed? The solution for them is to fine the families into submission. If that doesn’t work, then jail them. If that fails, then take the children away from them! Oh, these poor teachers indeed!

Richard’s latest update is dated 21 March:

We here in Germany want to thank all of you for what you are doing on our behalf. All of your emails have been a tremendous boost. The authorities are beginning to walk very carefully now. Our panel discussion last Friday night in Nordrheinwestfalen was a great success. If you only knew what odds we have overcome you would be amazed.

Here is a story from Sheila, a home educator in Germany dated 28 March 2005. They are required to send their children to school unless they get an **annual** exemption. They have applied for an exemption, but the German authorities have bun-

gled it and have fined them 500 Euros. Do they intend to pay the fine?

“No, we don’t. If it were simply a matter of paying 500 Euros and then being left in peace to homeschool for the next 20 years, I’m sure we’d find the money somewhere, but that’s not the case. We would still have to send our children to school, and so we’d then be levied with another fine, and then another, and then another. They would even be allowed to freeze our accounts and come into our home and take things to sell. (That would be interesting – our computer is probably the single thing worth the most, and it’s already two years old, making it not worth much! LOL) However, they couldn’t do any of that without warning, and we’d be out of the country before that could happen, which is why I’m able to laugh about it.

“The fact is that homeschooling is *not* forbidden by law, and that we have gone through the proper channels to request permission. They, however, have made so many legal errors that it’s laughable. It’s not our fault that it’s taking them so long to deal with us, and there’s even a provision in the law that..., although it doesn’t specifically pertain to schooling, [says that] as long as we’re in the process of trying to get exemption from compulsory school attendance laws because we believe it would go against our conscience to send our children to school, they cannot require us to send our child to school until a legal decision has been made. Of course, the education authorities *do* think a decision has been made, but since we know the correct legal procedures much better than they do (as does our lawyer!), we know that the decision that has been given us was *not* made legally!”

RFID Tags

A Primary School in Osaka, Japan, electronically tagged its students in 2004, just after Legoland amusement park in Denmark introduced a system of tagging all the kiddies entering there so they could be tracked faster whenever they got lost.¹ Dyfrig Ellis, head teacher of the Lonlas primary school near

Swansea, Wales, is keen to get a similar scheme going so he can tell when any of his 350 students wander off the campus.² And now since mid-January Brittan Elementary School in Sutter, California (just north of Sacramento), has made its students wear these RFID (radio frequency identification device) badges so their whereabouts can be known, tracked and recorded at any time.³

RFID technology is pretty much mainstream now, used in many applications in industry and business to keep track of inventory and distribution, etc. They can link with a GPS (Global Positioning System) to not only provide specific location information, but temperature, humidity, orientation, route, time spent at any one place and other historical and environmental factors. People have injected such chips into themselves so they could be located quickly if kidnapped, or perhaps to deter kidnappers....though a kidnapper with a knife might not be deterred. Escaped prisoners could be quickly tracked down.

It’s not just the health issue of having radio signals activated on something you are forced to wear (Brittan School Principal Earnie Graham says there is no cancer-causing radioactivity being emitted³), but the concerns of parents and civil liberty groups that such information might be collected and used by unauthorized people for unintended purposes. Graham for a start hopes to eventually add bar codes to the existing ID’s so that students can use them to pay for cafeteria meals and check out library books. The reason these RFID tags were introduced, of course, is to enhance student safety. That’s what they always say. “There is a way to make kids safer without making them feel like a piece of inventory,” said Michael Cantrall, one of several angry parents who complained to Graham. “Are we trying to bring them up with respect and trust, or tell them that you can’t trust anyone, you are always going to be monitored and someone is always going to be watching you?”

Well, after all, that is precisely

why the technology was designed in the first place. The parallel with keeping track of stray toddlers and pets, escaped prisoners and lost luggage is just too blatant, since “authorities” cannot or will not trust either parents, classroom teachers or students. Some parents may like the idea: these tags will conceivably be rigged to automatically ring a cell phone if the wearer strays beyond certain parameters of time and/or location with a message asking if they should be there.⁴ But how does that help a parent train a child....or a child to train himself and learn to carry responsibility? Government social engineers will be already salivating over what they will use these for once they have the power to tag everyone in the land. They view society as if it were one big laboratory: to get the results they’d want out of society, they’d need to control all the variables and orchestrate everything from the top. Bureaucracies have a natural tendency to do this already....and they’ve just been handed a great tool for advancing their agendas.

These things are being trialled in US passports and the US is likely to require incoming passengers to have the same in their passports. The information can be read by a reader without physical contact. Trials show they can be read at more than just a few centimetres away....and security would eventually demand that they be read by police helicopters so as to track terrorists. But then anyone with a reader could also read your information on your passport. Terrorists could then pick Yanks or Brits or Kiwis out of any crowd, download all your information, and you wouldn’t even know it was being done.⁵ People could cruise our neighbourhood scanning for whatever chips we might have in the home and learning all they can about us and our children. So much for safety. These RFID tags are a bad idea.

Notes:

1. Schoolchildren to be RFID-chipped, 8 July 2004, <http://tinyurl.com/2djja>
2. Schoolchildren to be tagged in safety trial, 21 January 2005, <http://tinyurl.com/6zpas>
3. Parents protest school mandate that students wear radio ID tags,

9 February 2005, <http://tinyurl.com/6n2ug>

4. Fighting Mandatory RFID in Schools, 10 February 2005, <http://tinyurl.com/5odkp>
5. Schneier on Security, 4 October 2004, <http://tinyurl.com/5kgub>

Bill Gates on Govt Schools

Bill Gates has declared American high schools “obsolete.” In a February 26 speech to the National Education Summit on High Schools, he said, “our high schools — even when they’re working exactly as designed — cannot teach our kids what they need to know today.” These criticisms are not new, but the fact that possibly the world’s most successful businessman is concerned should cause people to take notice...especially when there are others out there who say it is conspiracies by people exactly like Mr Gates which have made government schools the agents of dumbing down that they are.

Interestingly, many parents intend to home educate only until sixth or seventh grade. It’s a strange paradox. Many home educating families plan to stop home education right at the time when there is the greatest need for the high-quality educational benefits and advantages education at home provides.

Why don’t these parents have a vision for home education through high school? The main reason is a concern about the ability of parents to teach high school level classes. At first glance, it’s an understandable fear, but it is nonetheless unfounded. Few parents can teach all subjects at the high school level... few government school teachers can either. The same things that can make home education so successful at the lower grades work at the higher grades too: one-on-one mentoring, parents helping fire the student’s own motivation to learn and enthusiasm for the subject, mastery of basic skills which allow the student to teach himself almost anything, flexibility of hours and location to allow student to focus more precisely on a subject and seek out specialist help. About the only disadvantage is access to specialised equipment and the competition of

other highly-motivated scholars....disadvantages which could well be overcome by home education co-ops or other creative approaches.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s website describes the ideal school this way: “Successful schools combine rigor — high expectations and a meaningful course of study — with relationships — powerful, sustained involvement with caring adults who mentor, advise, and support students throughout their high school careers.” This sounds just like a typical home education set up!

Mr Gates is also concerned about the lack of civic participation by the average public school graduate. “In the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections, turnout among 18- to 25-year-olds was below 40 percent. ... [T]oday’s young people have the highest score on record on the Political Apathy Index. They are considerably less interested and knowledgeable about public affairs and therefore less able to participate effectively.”

This is not the case with the average home educator. In a 2004 study by the National Home Education Research Institute, the number of home educators aged 18 to 24 who had voted in the past five years was 76 percent!

(From: HSLDA *Washington Times* Op-ed – Public Education Isn’t Preparing Teens, 21 March 2005, <http://www.hslda.org/docs/news/washingtontimes/200503210.asp>)

Monday Zombies

Christchurch principals are alarmed at the growing numbers of teenagers turning up to school “like zombies” after weekends spent boozing and partying. Health authorities, too, are worried the drinking and drug-taking habits of some students are affecting their education and putting them at risk. Schools and drug and alcohol agencies are urging parents to get tough on their children and crack down on their party weekends.

Christchurch Youth Health Centre senior doctor Sue Bagshaw sees the effects of teenage drinking every Monday, with girls as young as 14 queueing up for emergency contraception advice after drunken sexual encounters.

Canterbury West Coast Secondary Principals’ Association chairwoman Linda Tame said, “I think it’s a big problem and I think it’s bigger than most parents realise.”

(From: *The Press*, 26 March 2005, Schools fear for ‘zombies’, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3228967a7694,00.html>)

How to Pat the Dog

Children are spending as much time in school learning “life skills” — such as how to pat a dog — as they are reading and writing. Educationists say primary schools have become a dumping ground for programmes that are not necessarily a school’s role, such as career planning, hygiene, fire and cycle safety, sun sense and values — and the list is growing every day.

Primary teachers’ union president Colin Tarr said New Zealand had one of the fullest curriculums in the developed world, and schools were continually being “lumped with” extra programmes. Society’s attitude appeared to be, “right, children need to know these things. Make the primary school do it. It’s getting out of hand,” said Mr Tarr.

Education Ministry curriculum manager Mary Chamberlain said work was under way to reduce the curriculum. It was overcrowded, and a revised system was needed. “There are increasing pressures for schools to deal with every issue.... You can’t learn everything there is to learn any more.”

Miramar South School principal Jeanette De La Mare said parents were now too busy to teach life skills and teachers were expected to fill the gap. Assistant principal Kyran Smith said, “Teaching things like keeping yourself safe is really important but often the teacher is the first person to even introduce these things.”

(From: *Dominion Post*, 7 March

2005, 'Life skills' get in the way of teaching, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3208685a7694,00.html>)

Build Good Relationships

Modern nuclear families are raising children who do not know how to share or empathise with others, a visiting child trauma expert says. Many children in Western countries were growing up with one tenth of the "inter-relational time" that kids elsewhere had in extended families, according to American child psychologist Dr Bruce Perry, who has done research into the effect of neglect on the biological development of children's brains.

Instead, children as young as four years old were spending time in front of the television and being drilled in cognitive skills such as reading and maths. These cognitive skills were replacing inter-relational development at a critical stage of a child's brain development, Perry said.

A recent New Zealand study by the Department of Corrections identified lack of empathy as a major trait of youth offenders. The author of the study, clinical psychologist Nick Wilson, said Perry's work provided a possible explanation for the lack of remorse shown by some offenders.

Perry said many children brought up in the West had a "poverty" of relationships. Extended families had been broken down into unnaturally small groups, creating socially deprived children. Wilson disputed Perry's claim that modern upbringing limited children's contact with a range of people. "(Parents) work and they (children) go off to crèche where they have relationships with a multitude of adults and other children. Is not that a resilience factor?"¹

The *TEACH Bulletin* editor would answer, "No", pointing out that Wilson had missed the point of what Perry said when he used the term "relationships". While a child at a crèche may have quite a few acquaintances, the nature of a crèche or day-care or pre-school or

Coming Events

Sat, 4 June 2005

Nelson Workshop
Contact: Philippa (03) 522-4213
zarephath@paradise.net.nz

Mon, 6 June 2005

Westport Evening Meeting
Contact: Christine (03) 789-6156
spencez@xtra.co.nz

school environment virtually eliminates the possibility of developing meaningful robust relationships. The home education environment, on the other hand, was ideal for developing and maintaining strong, meaningful, long-term relations with parents and siblings and even grandparents and other members of the whanau. The overriding characteristics of classroom and crèche environments is transience and superficiality compared with permanence and intimacy in the family home education environment. If modern nuclear families are blamed for raising children who cannot empathise, it is because most of these families hand their children over to anti-family institutions for the bulk of the day.

1. *The Press*, Modern children are selfish and can't empathise – expert, 5 March 2005, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3207523a7694,00.html>

NZ Curriculum Project: Student Views on the Curriculum

Over 100 intermediate and secondary students from all over NZ were asked their views between April and July 2004.

Technology featured significantly in students' views of the future. Many perceived the advancement of technology as negative, especially in terms of making people "lazier". Being successful meant being financially secure.

English, Health Education, Maths

Tues, 7 June 2005

Hokitika Evening Meeting
Contact: Sonya (03) 755-5300
mcgarveys@xtra.co.nz

Wed, 6 July 2005

4th Annual Home Educators History Fair
Venue: Morrinsville Presbyterian Church Hall, corner Anderson Street and Canada Street, Morrinsville,
Contact: Robyn, ph. (07) 889-1189, robyn_smith@maxnet.co.nz

For more information on Coming Events throughout the month, see www.hef.org.nz and click on Coming Events

and Technology were all viewed fairly negatively as subjects while Science and the Performing Arts were viewed most favourably.

Many of the negative comments about English related to writing. PE attracted a number of strongly negative comments. "It's a waste of time. You spend more time writing (forging) notes to get out of it than actually doing it," complained a girl from a year 11 to 13 group. Maths attracted many negative comments; clearly, some students didn't like it or see its relevance in their lives. "Pointless – who really cares if $X=3$ or $X=5$, unless you want a maths-focused career?" said one student.

Having warm, positive relationships with students, showing respect, being passionate and knowledgeable about their subject and recognising different speeds and styles of learning all featured strongly in the responses by the students to the question of how teachers could help them learn. Even parents can take a few clues from this to improve our home education endeavours.

(From: http://www.tki.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/studentviews_e.php)