

Summary Answers to Many Questions

During August last year the MoE's Lower Hutt Management Office held a series of 12 informal get-to-know-you meetings with home educators throughout the lower North Island. Home educators in attendance asked many questions and the MoE undertook to answer them as well as they could.

Here then for the benefit of all are a number of answers provided by Jeanette Voyce, Student Support Coordinator, Central South Region of the MoE, presented here simply as points of information.

(Please understand that ever since the Education Act re-vamp of 1989, wherein most administrative functions of schools were de-centralised from the old Department of Education and given over to locally elected School Boards of Trustees, there can be no across-the-board rulings by the MoE in regards to many issues of how state schools and home educators would relate to one another. Please also keep in mind that the following are written with the lower North Island specifically in mind.)

- ◆ It is not anticipated that the supervisory allowance will be increased any time soon.
- ◆ Some families have the impression that permission to educate children at home may be withdrawn. On the contrary, this option will continue to be available in the foreseeable future.
- ◆ Visits from the ERO will continue much the same as they are for registered schools. ERO has agreed to visit new homeschool families within the first 18 months of being granted an ex-

emption. They will also visit as soon as possible if there are three or more children being educated at home.

- ◆ Some families wanted to know if they could be given the identity of anyone who has raised a concern about a home education programme. The answer is no. If families are doing the right thing, they have nothing to fear if an ERO responds to such an issue. It is important for both the education of and the safety of the child, that people are able to report concerns and not be hindered by the pos-

sible release of their name.

- ◆ The MoE has a few websites that could be useful. Try out the following, the first one in particular: www.teamup.co.nz www.edcentre.govt.nz (the educators option is the one you will find most useful) www.ncea.govt.nz or 0800 623 243 will be helpful when you need specific information about courses www.tki.govt.nz.
- ◆ LEOTC (Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom) information can be accessed by opening the TKI site, then EOTC community, then LEOTC page, then check out current providers. A private arrangement can be made with providers to take part in activities with both parties agreeing to the details. Other providers that may not be listed include places like zoos and museums

Ten Good Reasons for Free Market Schooling

1. Free Market Schooling means unsafe schools will go out of business. Disciplined by competition, Free Market Schools won't tolerate violence because parents can easily move their children to a competitor.

2. Free Market Schooling will provide a psychologically safer environment for children. When we think of emotional bullying, we typically think of children bullying each other. But more damage can be done when adults tell little children their parents are wrong. The immature child suffers psychological abuse when he is forced to decide which authority figure not to believe, his parents or his school. The child can resolve such "cognitive dissonance" by con-

cluding truth can be anything he wants it to be. This confusion about reality impedes development of reasoning because reality appears inconsistent. Free Market Schooling avoids this emotional trauma because (a) private schools advertise their worldview or religion so parents know what they're getting, and (b) parents can more easily change schools if they discover they are being undermined.

3. Free Market Schooling fosters responsibility. Many parents feel helpless in the face of educational authorities telling them they're not qualified to make education decisions. Many abdicate their child-rearing decisions to these "credentialed experts." With Free Market Schooling, all

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and local councils. LEOTC programmes are funded by the MoE and are specifically for the enhancement of classroom programmes.

- ◆ NCEA courses are bench-marked internationally which means the results are more useful than the former external exams which weren't automatically recognised by other countries.
- ◆ Access to University is not as straight forward as it used to be when one could arrange to sit University Entrance at a local school. However, there are still pathways to enrolment, and I think when the wrinkles have been ironed out, it will be easier. Here are some options: Some families have arranged a teacher at a local high school to verify that the standard of work the student is operating at is of the appropriate difficulty. The teacher doesn't set the work or mark it, but it is a helpful preparation for sitting external exams. ACE level 12 pass will give discretionary entrance, and ACE level 13 pass will guarantee entrance. Some Universities provide a one term "trial" course, a pass in which will guarantee entrance. (Victoria University at time of writing

charged \$1,200 for this course.) International Baccalaureate and Cambridge exam passes have been used successfully. Some families have had success by providing a comprehensive portfolio of the student's work, making sure the level of work the student is operating at is clear. Perhaps home education organisations could approach universities and get some advice on how best to make entrance to university a little more straight forward.

- ◆ Access to Group Special Education (GSE) Services seems to be uneven from one area to another. I have checked with Area Managers, and the following is the relevant information: If parents believe there is a good chance their child meets the criteria for ORRS (Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes) funding or speech and language therapy, they contact their local GSE office and make an appointment to have the student verified. Students who are home educated, if they meet the same criteria as everyone else, are entitled to the same support as students from regular schools with the exception of teacher aide support. Speech and language therapy is available for those who need it. *Verified* students are entitled to ongoing assistance until they turn 21. Under Section 9 of the Education Act 1989, home educated students have as much right to Special Education as anyone else. No more, no less.
- ◆ There was some fear expressed about the likelihood of a home educated student with special needs being forcibly removed from the home learning environment and sent to a special facility of one kind or another. This could lead to parents trying to hide or minimise the extent of a child's learning disability. We have never

heard of this happening and believe it to be very unlikely. It is better for parents to be up front with any difficulties their children are experiencing so that appropriate learning programmes can be planned and implemented.

- ◆ Parents continue to get the supervisory allowance until the student is 19 provided the exemption has been granted before the student turns 16.
- ◆ There are courses available at The Correspondence School (TCS) that home educators can apply for. This, in most cases, is at the discretion of The Correspondence School, and it is better if families contact the registrar at TCS and explain their particular reasons for wanting to enrol a student. The supervisory allowance ceases when enrolment takes place.
- ◆ ID cards for exempted students are a good idea. This is not something the MoE would issue, but there is nothing stopping one of your support groups setting up an annually renewable system of issuing an ID card that would include a passport type photo and an expiry date. The process would have to be carefully thought through to ensure only those eligible would receive an ID card. Possession of such a card would make life a lot easier for students and truancy officers.
- ◆ Professional development for those parents who would like to find new and interesting ways to run their programmes can contact Deidre Vercauteren at School Support Services at Victoria University on (04) 924-2112 or (029) 924-2112 or Ann Powell at Massey on (06) 356-9099 ext 8280. They can let you know what is currently available that interested people can subscribe to, or they could work with a group, on a cost recovery basis, to provide a tailor-made course.
- ◆ Families who foster "difficult" children and home educate them need to approach CYFS for support.
- ◆ The issue of legal responsibility in the case of non-enrolled students, eg. Home educated children, being on a registered school's property needs some clarification. Assuming the

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

school is happy to have such students join in with some activities, the students must sign the visitors book and be under the jurisdiction of the school, i.e., normal school rules apply to the visiting students. The principal or BOT would have the power to revoke permission to come to the school if there was a problem of one kind or another.

- ◆ Community Education (eg., night classes) is designed for adults, initially to develop new skills and catch up on missed education during school years. It is designed for persons who have left school, i.e., adult learners. Students in state school are ineligible also.
- ◆ Re — Family application for exemption rather than separate exemptions for individual students. It is required by section 21(1)(b) of the Education Act 1989 that each application must be treated separately.
- ◆ Because public money is involved, the statutory declarations still have to be signed in the presence of a lawyer or a Justice of the Peace.
- ◆ Peter Sharp, Executive Director of the Secondary Sports Council, PO Box 36005, Merivale, Christchurch, was able to confirm the following: There is no problem with home educated students playing in a secondary school team at a local level if both parties agree. The situation changes if the team is playing at a National level when only full-time students from the school can be team members. This is, of course, designed to prevent a school “stacking” their team with the best players around. It is not designed as a mechanism to exclude such students as home educators or pupils from a small school down the road. A similar situation exists at primary school level where it is not unusual to find students from small schools combining to field a team. It would, however, be unreasonable to expect a home educator to displace a student from a school team. There is nothing stopping a school including a home educator in a local competition. In some cases, if there are enough pupils, they could form a club team and enter a local competition.

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parents will be in the position of home schooling parents: They expect to make decisions about education. These same parents learned to make choices about cars, computers, health care and careers. They can learn how to select schools. No one says, “I’m neither a car nor a career expert, so I want the government to pick them for me.” Parents get involved in education when they *directly* pay for it. Every time the government takes on more parental duties, parents will parent less. Ask a sports coach what happens when you expect nothing. There is no utopian escape from bad parenting, but Free Market Schooling at least offers hope to involve parents and thus reverse the decline of parenting.

4. Free Market Schooling will be the “Great Emancipator of the Poor.” Innovation and competition will cut the cost of schooling by 50-80 percent while improving quality over the “public schools” that are mis-serving the poor today. Good super-saver schools will be available for \$40-60 per week in America as they are today for \$1-3 per week in Brazil, India and several countries in Africa. Even at \$60 per week, between a quarter and a third of American families will need tuition help. Can we prudently expect enough to be contributed voluntarily? Yes. Americans currently donate over \$200 billion per year to charities, including over \$30 billion to higher education. To make sure that 15 million lower-income children have access to good schools, private K-12 scholarship programs need to expand by \$25-30 billion per year. This is prudently predictable considering current charitable levels and the \$400+ billion tax cut resulting from the extinction of compulsion schooling. (In New Zealand, if we combine the increased income of every family from (a) the newly increased Family Support scheme and (b) the huge tax cut as a result of no more MoE and ERO, plus New Zealanders’ exceptional record as givers to those in need, everyone will be easily able to buy private education.)

5. Free Market Schooling improves real tolerance and civic harmony and also protects minorities and cultural diversity.

Advocates of compulsion schooling claim that “public schools” are necessary to unite us as a nation. Nothing could be further from the truth: compulsion schooling creates conflicts by forcing “one-size-fits-all” on our diverse population. Today’s harmony-breaking issues are rooted in teaching methods and religious beliefs. Pedagogy battles include back-to-basics vs. progressive methods such as phonics vs. whole language and traditional math vs. “new math” and “new new math.” Religion-rooted battles range from “evolution as fact” vs. “evolution as one of several theories” to “abstinence until marriage” vs. “sexual experimentation to find one’s ‘sexual identity.’” Regarding minorities, America has been simultaneously generous and cruel to minorities, especially immigrants. Compulsion schooling has been and still is the major instrument to cleanse society of minority differences. Every few decades, the minorities qualifying for such abuse changes. In the past, Indians, blacks, Cajuns, Hispanics and others have been abused. Today, those who don’t vaccinate or recycle, those who enjoy guns or drive gas guzzlers, those who believe in free markets or complain about welfare are some of the minorities whose children qualify for bullying by textbooks (and some teachers) in “public” schools. For America to grow toward an ideal of free minds, free speech, free markets — indeed, a free people — we must stop using schools to force acceptance of the politically correct ideas *du jour*. When schooling is fully returned to the free market, such conflicts are handled within the family. For contrast, note that we never have “pizza wars.” The conflict between vegetarians and meat lovers never splits a community because we don’t allow our neighbors to vote on what our family has for dinner. We don’t live in pizza districts. With Free Market Schooling, we won’t live in school districts.

6. Free Market Schooling fosters better academic achievement. Removing government compulsion means that schools will be

free to use time more efficiently. In the past, eighth-grade graduates mastered subject material far beyond that covered by most of today's high schools. A generation of homeschooling has proven students still can learn much more in fewer hours and fewer years. Free Market Schools will offer individualization so children do not have to "adapt to the herd" in learning style and pace. Today's square pegs will find square holes in which to learn. With the repeal of compulsion attendance, those few children actually unfit for classroom instruction will not be in classrooms. Other programs will be devised for them. The innovation to do this is sadly suppressed by today's compulsion schooling, but glimpses can be seen in private continuation schools.

7. Free Market Schooling is good for educators. Teachers and administrators will be able to do what attracted them to teaching — concentrate on children rather than bureaucratic rules. Principals and teachers who share a worldview and an education philosophy will start their own schools, often renting space in former government-school buildings. Like physicians, they'll hire assistants and business managers, not superintendents. Schools will be smaller and more numerous. Teachers will typically know the name of every child in the school. Some teachers will bring back "dame schools" where a teacher instructs 8-15 students in her home. Teacher pay will go both up and down: up for the best, down or eliminated for those to whom parents will not willingly send their children. Parents, not politicians, will be educators' customers. Teachers will not be subject to the whims of the latest "Education Governor."

8. Free Market Schooling better utilizes student and teacher time. Repealing compulsion attendance and compulsion content promotes competition to lower prices while improving the service. This will spur educators to become more careful in the way they use student, teacher, and administrator time. Bright children will likely spend fewer hours and years in secondary education. Technological innovations will allow some students to

study from home or learning centers, arranging their own schedules. Students who have mastered material need not repeat it year after year simply because that's what is done at each grade level. Efficiency will free up resources for more special interest classes, vocational and technological job training, and part-time work to help pay tuition.

9. Free Market Schooling will reduce waste. Colleges and businesses will become more efficient when high school graduates can think, read, write and compute. Students with specific career goals can partner with like-minded businesses for apprenticeship programs. Millions of people will be added to the productive sector as the largely wasted age of adolescence gives way to creativity and production.

10. Free Market Schooling is available for your family now. It may take one or two generations for enough Americans to see the benefits of Free Market Schooling, hence achieve the political will to repeal the compulsion we have come to accept as normal. It took several generations under communism for the Russians to reverse course. But unlike the Soviet Union, America is still free enough that you can achieve the most important benefits for your family without waiting for 51 percent of your neighbors to "get the plot." It simply means extra sacrifice to forego the "free public schooling" and either home school or put your children in a nongovernment school that reinforces your beliefs.

Epilogue

"Free Market Schooling" means educational services are offered without compulsion or subsidy by any level of government. This means repealing the state's compulsory control over financing, attendance, content and regulation of teachers and institutions. All such ideas of government compulsion are central to today's "public schooling."

"Free Market Schooling" requires the separation of *school* and state

in the same way we all expect separation of *church* and state. We should not expect the government to run the "Monday School" for the same reasons we do not want it to run the "Sunday School."

"Free Market Schooling" means repealing the compulsory aspects of schooling passed in New Zealand in 1877. It means reversing school socialism, that is, the ownership and operation of schools by central Government in Wellington.

"Free Market Schooling" avoids the menace of an educational *monopoly*, to which the Integration Act is moving New Zealand very rapidly, wherein there is only a *single provider*: government schools and once-private schools now integrated into the government schooling system. In this scenario, one-size-fits-all is the mantra for achieving best economies of scale. And the huge MoE bureaucracy, like all bureaucracies everywhere, takes on a life of its own dedicated to serving its own existence rather than that of those school children for whom it was originally established.

"Free Market Schooling" avoids the other menace of an educational *monopsony*, wherein there is only a *single customer*: schooling that results from tax-funded school vouchers or education tax-credits, for the government is ultimately paying for it all, and it will do so according to the political philosophy of the party in power, since its agents issue the vouchers (redeemable only at "approved" institutions) and write the cheques. In a truly free market, schools can be operated by a variety of custodians ranging from private individuals to teacher co-ops; from for-profit corporations to tax-exempt churches and charities; from secular to mildly religious to highly religious. Just remember that the essence of the free market is not the presence of the profit motive but the absence of force and compulsion.

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Would You Be Happy Buying This Car?

The Government passed a law years ago saying that everyone is entitled to a “free” car, and therefore everyone must have one, paid for from the public purse.

“From the public purse” of course means you pay for everyone else’s Government-issued car – and your own too – through your taxes, whether you ever need one or not. You pay for your car every year for your entire life. You pay for it long before receiving it and long after it is no longer being driven.

Everyone in your neighbourhood gets exactly the same type of car.

Non-government-issued cars, those from private dealerships, may or may not be available in your area, but they will cost you extra, for you will still pay for the Government-issued car, whether you ever use it or not.

The Government does let you provide your own car if you can convince them you can do it. But most people like the idea of a “free” car, even though it really isn’t free. And since the Government has been providing cars for everyone for so long, most people simply couldn’t imagine themselves providing their own car.

The price of the Government-issued car costs roughly twice as much as a car from a private dealership and about 10 times what it costs people to provide their own cars.

Your Government issued car has no warranty whatsoever. If it proved to be faulty and didn’t work or worse, it actually damaged you or your children or others, you could not sue the Government for any kind of compensation.

The Government keeps a standing army of car sales agents who constantly tell you how well your car is doing, even when you know it is not doing well at all.

These agents also keep telling you how exciting the models coming out next year will be. Yet often the new

cars are experimental versions that don’t work well at all. For some reason, they cannot simply go back to the good models that did work well, and it takes years to get these experimental versions off the road.

The Government also has a standing army of auto mechanics. You can only use your car when these mechanics are on duty....and they only work 5 days a week for about 6 hours a day for about 9 months of the year.

When you use your Government-issued car for the first time in every year, the mechanics require you to pay them an extra fee, telling you that otherwise you may not get the full use out of your car in that year, even though the Government tells you that the mechanics’ services are already covered.

Most of the day-to-day maintenance of the car is handled by you, rather than the mechanics.

In fact, virtually everyone does provide their own car for those vast periods of time when the Government auto mechanics are not on duty: yet the mechanics and the sales agents have convinced virtually everyone that the car they might provide for themselves is so low-quality, it hardly rates being called a “car”. And so most people do not believe they do provide their own car, even though they do!

Whenever the sales agents and the mechanics want a raise, they get the Government to put the price of Government cars up. But few ever notice this and continue to see their cars as “free” cars.

These car sales agents and the mechanics constantly go on about how we need more cars and more agents and more mechanics.

Occasionally, especially when they want a wage rise, these mechanics will go on strike, meaning you cannot use your Government-issued car then either. People often provide their own cars at such times....or simply go without.

When your Government-issued

car breaks down, the mechanics blame the owners...they must be bad owners.

If your Government-issued car wins a race of some kind, the mechanics and the sales agents take all the credit.

Government-issued cars can only be filled up at Government-approved petrol stations.

Many Government automobile sales agents and mechanics actually elect to get their own cars from private dealerships!

Your Government car today is getting something like 30% lower mileage and yet is costing fifteen times more than the Government cars of 1960.

(This provides quite a refreshing perspective on the entire schooling industry if we read “Car” as schools/schooling/education, “Sales Agents” as State School Administrators and MoE personnel and “Mechanics” as teachers.)

Barfing Beauties

Bulimic schoolgirls, gathering on campus to vomit in groups, characterise the latest new trend spawned by the obsessive peer pressure of institutional life at school.

Young movie stars and teen magazines such as *Dolly* feed the craze for skinny bodies which leads to eating disorders, mostly in young girls, such as bulimia (binge eating or even regular meals followed by forced regurgitation or abuse of laxatives and diuretics) and anorexia (self-imposed starvation). Dr Geoffrey Buckett, the clinical head of the South Island Eating Disorders Service, was horrified to find that joint vomiting sessions were considered normal among some Christchurch bulimic teens. He said three Christchurch students told him: “We go around behind the sheds in groups of 10 of us and drink milk and throw up.”

Misery loves company, but who would have thought to chunder with chums? Buckett said the emergence of group up-chuck sessions was an indication of how entrenched eating

disorders had become, particularly in schools.¹ For home educators, it is simply more evidence of the kind of harmful attitudes and pathological peer pressures students are surrounded by in the much-vaunted socialisation of schooling institutions.

Nelson College for Girls had been recognised at one time as the school with the highest rate of eating disorders in the South Island. Principal Alison McAlpine, a member of the Secondary Principals' Association's five-strong national executive, declared that her school did not have a problem with the incidence of eating disorders *any worse than other girls' schools*. She went on to say that eating disorders were "an ongoing concern" for schools around the country.²

One in twenty 18- to 24-year-olds has had bulimia at some time. About 2,400 new cases of anorexia or bulimia were diagnosed every year, and more than twice this number would fall under the category of "non-specific eating disorders". So Dr Bucket's proposal to address the issue is to get psychologists to create an individual plan for schools with particular problems, depending on the number of students involved and their specific eating disorders.¹

Schools are not responsible for the problem, but they will be called upon to do something about it. They cannot, of course, even begin to deal effectively with the confused and merciless peer pressure that grips the emotions of young girls, since much of this pressure is fomented at the school itself, as part of its "invisible" socialisation curriculum. Home educators, however, can supply their children with edifying and realistic images and role models by first turning off the TV, throwing out the *Dolly* magazines and regulating the socialisation regime with school children. They then read and discuss good books together while learning skills while helping to manage the family household economy. It is a simple matter of emphasising one's duty to contribute purposeful and meaningful work in the family context over the self-centred desire to pursue fun, entertainment and social acceptance among friends.

Notes:

1. *The Press*, Schoolgirls face bulimia crisis, 18 January 2006, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3543447a10,00.html>
2. *The Press*, Schools must be alert to eating disorders, 19 January 2006, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3544550a7694,00.html>

The Perils of Daycare Centres

A hepatitis A outbreak that infected 25 people in Christchurch was traced to a Ferrymead childcare center. Public health officials confirmed that all notified cases of the viral liver disease involved families with children at the ABC Learning Centre in Ferrymead, a Christchurch suburb, or people who had been to parties with the centre's children.^{1,2}

Canterbury medical officer of health Mel Brieseman warned that further cases were likely because the disease was "extremely contagious", particularly in the two weeks before jaundice developed. One 42-year-old Christchurch mother, whose son is at the Ferrymead centre, spent seven days in hospital with jaundice, after feeling unwell for much of December.¹

ABC manager Cindy Paul said she was disappointed by the outbreak as staff had strict hygiene training. Yet the outbreak appears to have nothing to do with staff and everything to do with poorly trained pre-school children and parents who apparently rely of the pre-school staff to train their children in all the basics, including toilet training. Hepatitis A, you see, is spread by contact with faeces from one child to the next and then to their parents. Interestingly enough, most of those affected were adults (17) rather than children (8).² If those parents who became ill were simply doing their job, training their own children to wash their hands thoroughly by doing it with them every time, something pre-school staff can hardly be expected to do

consistently, those parents would not have contracted the disease.

"Hygiene in the community is not as good as it should be," Brieseman confirmed. That is why a disease like hepatitis A spreads so rapidly once it is introduced. So who is responsible for teaching little children how to wash their hands? Parents. But it would appear that after two generations of parents sending their little ones off to pre-school before they are properly trained in both the how and the why of hand washing, many parents simply may not have this basic tool of health properly internalised themselves.

As Mel Brieseman commented, the hygiene practices at ABC Learning Centre were *no better or worse than any other childcare centre*. Most people in general did not wash their hands properly after going to the toilet. "If children don't learn at that age, when do they learn?"²

One parent who has two children at the Ferrymead centre will continue to send them along. "When they have had outbreaks of diarrhoea and vomiting in the past, they have disinfected every single toy, which is not an easy thing to do."¹ This commitment by the staff to cleaning up after an outbreak is enough for this parent. Neither the occurrence of diarrhoea and vomiting outbreaks in the past nor this more serious hepatitis A outbreak caused this parent to raise prevention by non-participation as an option.

Brieseman said the Ferrymead centre would not be closed. "Most of the exposure has already occurred, so closure would not achieve anything."¹ Indeed. If it had not been operating in the first place, if children were not so routinely exposed to epidemic-facilitating conditions, the outbreak would not have happened. Brieseman again: "If we can transmit hepatitis A this readily then the risk of transmitting avian flu ... well, I hate to think what would happen."²

Epidemiologists have known for some time that day-care centers expose young children to various diseases. Evidence is now accumulating indicating that day care imperils the well-being of children who have

not yet even been born. The latest cautionary findings appear in a study published in *Epidemiology & Infection* by a team of researchers at McGill University and three Montreal hospitals.

Examining medical data collected from 492 female employees of 81 randomly selected Montreal day-care centers, the authors of the new study find that an alarming number of these employees were vulnerable to parvovirus B19, a pathogenic virus known to harm and even kill unborn children of infected pregnant women. The researchers calculate that among the women of child-bearing age (younger than 50) involved in the study, almost one-third (30.6%) were “susceptible to acquiring B19 parvovirus infection.” The researchers further report that “the proportion of susceptibles increased to 52.4% in those aged under 25 years.”

Because “parvovirus B19 infection in pregnancy is recognized in Canada as a hazard for the unborn child,” the authors of the new study stress “the need for preventive measures.” Rubber gloves and frequent hand-washing may help, but perhaps it is time for those who care about the well-being of the unborn on both sides of the border to start thinking about simply closing these disease-spreading centers and sending children home, where their own mothers can care for them.³

Notes:

1. *The Press*, Daycare centre is hepatitis link, 14 Jan 2006, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3539756a10,00.html>
2. *The Press*, Virus shows “deadly gaps” in hygiene, 16 Jan 2006, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3541271a10,00.html>
3. N.L. Gilbert *et al*, “Seroprevalence of parvovirus B19 infection in daycare educators,” *Epidemiology & Infection* 133 [2005]: 299-304. As quoted in The Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society, World Congress of Families: Family Update, Online! Vol 7, Issue 3. 17 Jan 2006.

Are Students Being Dumbed Down?

Victoria University’s pro-chancellor, Ian McKinnon, says the bar is too low for those New Zealand students finishing high school and hoping to go on to university. The University Entrance qualification of 42 NCEA credits is fooling students to think they are smarter than they are, that gaining this many credits does not equate to being ready to take on a university level degree programme. He reckons the title, “University Entrance”, is misleading and suggests it be renamed as a “leaving certificate”. Universities could then come up with their own assessment instruments.¹

Maybe New Zealand will follow the course anecdotal evidence says it has always taken in the past and simply do as the USA colleges apparently do: dumb all the students down.

A recent report from the National Center of Education Statistics reveals that only 31 percent of college graduates can read a complex book and extrapolate from it. “It’s really astounding,” said Michael Gorman, president of the American Library Association. “That’s not saying much for the remainder,” meaning that 69 percent of college graduates cannot read at or above a “proficient” level.

The *Boston Globe* of 26 December 2005 explained that the test measured how well adults handled basic reading tasks – such as figuring out costs per ounce of food items, comparing viewpoints on two editorials and reading prescription labels. Of graduate students [those studying for degrees higher than BA or BSc] tested in 2003, 41 percent were classified as “proficient” in prose – able to read and understand information in short texts – down 10 percent since 1992. As for college graduates [those studying for a first degree, i.e., BA or BSc], only 31 percent were classified as proficient – compared with 40 percent in 1992. The results were based on a sample of more than 19,000 individuals 16 or older, who were interviewed in their homes. They

were asked to read prose, do math, and find facts in documents.

Long-time advocate of the phonics method for teaching reading, Dr Samuel Blumenfeld, has little sympathy for this situation. “When educators tell us ‘We just don’t have a good explanation,’ they are lying through their teeth.” He explains that many people have clearly identified the problem and told how to cure it, starting with Rudolf Flesch and his famous book, *Why Johnny Can’t Read* written way back in 1955!

Dr Blumenfeld’s own research into the whole-word or look-say methodology led him to predict in his 1973 book *The New Illiterates* that people taught to read in this way would become reading disabled. Apparently the Rev. Thomas H. Gallaudet invented this method back in the 1830s as a means of teaching the deaf to read. Thinking his method might work with hearing children, Rev. Gallaudet did experiments with it in the primary schools of Boston in the 1840s. The massive failure caused the method to be thrown out. It was brought back, according to Dr Blumenfeld, by the progressive educators at the turn of the last century as a means of dumbing down the populace so that they could be easily led to accept socialism as a new way of life.

“I can state categorically that we are dealing with a liberal-socialist teaching establishment that has its own social and political agenda that it has imposed on public education. Everyone knows that the public schools have been in the hands of the liberal left since the 1930s, and that the politically powerful National Education Association [America’s largest teachers’ union] has a radical leftist agenda, which it promotes among teachers and teachers of teachers. The school curriculum, the teaching methods, the philosophy of education they promote is the cause of our literacy decline.

“That is why the homeschool movement continues to grow. More and more parents have come to the realization that the public schools are controlled by those who want to impose their social philosophy over the entire nation. It is now called

'political correctness,' and it permeates every aspect of our lives."

Notes:

1. *Dominion Post*, "Bar too low" for uni students, 31 Dec 2005, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3526675a11,00.html>
2. Samuel Blumenfeld, College illiteracy stuns educators, 12 Jan 2006, http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=48309. Dr Blumenfeld has developed his own phonics reading programme you may acquire by emailing him at sblumenfeld@worldnetdaily.com.

Quotable Quotes to Encourage Home Educators

Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci, Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln never saw a movie, heard a radio or looked at television. They had loneliness and knew what to do with it. They were not afraid of being lonely because they knew that was when the creative mood in them would work.

— Carl Sandberg

Three things that can give any young man or woman a running start in this competitive world are good manners, good speech and the habit of reading. The humblest home can assure these; the costliest school cannot.

— Richard Needham
in *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto

Coming Events

For updates on this information, see www.hef.org.nz and click Coming Events

Tue 7 Feb 2006

6th Annual Home Education Celebration

Time: 11am—2pm

Venue: One Tree Hill/Maungakiekie Domain (adjacent to Stardome Planetarium), 670 Manukau Rd., Royal Oak, Auckland.

Cost: Free; BYO Picnic.

Co-ordinated by Auckland Home Educators, Inc. A wonderful opportunity to mix 'n mingle with about 250 others.

Contact: Dawn, 027-435-8922, burgins.of.auckland@xtra.co.nz, www.home-education.org.nz

Sat 11 Feb 2006

Curriculum Fair Manawatu

Time: 10am — 4pm

Venue: Harmony House, Reformed Church, 541 Ruahine St., Palmerston North

Entry: free

Vendors:

- Home Education Foundation, Palmerston North, **10:20am**. Keystone Journal, Bluedorn Trivium and Logic
- LearnEx, Auckland, **11:00am**. Math U See, Apologia, Story of the World, Schonell Spelling, Door-

posts, Jolly Phonics, Runkle Geography, etc.

- Dayspring Academy, Palmerston North, **11:40am**. Lending library, school supplies, science equipment, etc.
- Issacharian Books, Palmerston North, **1:20pm**. Christian living books and tapes.
- Geneva Books, Palmerston North, **2:00pm**. GA Henty, Christian Liberty Press, Ruth Beechick, Bob Jones, Rod & Staff, Bibles, etc.
- Christian Education Services, Auckland, **2:40pm**. Abeka, Saxon Maths, Greenleaf Press, Diana Waring, NZ Science, etc.
- TISA Education Services, Hastings, **3:20pm**. Singapore Maths.

Program: Browse the stalls. Each vendor will also give a 15-20 minute mini-seminar to more fully explore for you their products and services. The time for each vendor's talk is noted next to their name above. Free tea and coffee!

Contact: Sandra, ph. (06) 354-5678. Elliotts@clear.net.nz

March 2006

International Conference Speakers

Dr Jay Wile of Apologia Science
Sally Clarkson of Whole Heart Ministries

20-21 March = Christchurch

21-22 March = Wellington

24-25 March = Auckland

Supported by LearnEx, Christian Education Services and CENZ (Christian Education NZ)

Contact: Carol, ph. (09) 410-3933.

Sat 1 April 2006

Education Resource Expo Hamilton

Incorporates Science and Maths Fair.

Contact: edexpo@xtra.co.nz
<http://edexpo.bravehost.com>

Action Station

1. Write a submission to the Justice and Electoral Select Committee of Parliament telling them that you oppose the Crimes (Abolition of Force as a Justification for Child Discipline) Amendment Bill. It can be very short giving only one reason (i.e., it will too greatly compromise parental authority with their own children) plus one recommendation (leave Section 59 intact, just as it is). Send 20 copies addressed to: Clerk of the Committee, Justice and Electoral Committee, Select Committee Office, Parliament Buildings, WELLINGTON, to arrive by 28 February 2006. Further guidelines on submission writing at: <http://tinyurl.com/46u2e>. This matter is far too important to ignore. The integrity of every New Zealand family is at stake. See www.FamilyIntegrity.org.nz. Submission Toolkit at: <http://section59.org>

2. Contact Family.Integrity@xtra.co.nz, (06) 357-4399, for brochures to distribute to family, friends, church, neighbours.

3. Mark the Coming Events into your calendar!

CRAIG S. SMITH, Editor