

January 2014 Newsletter

NCHENZ Executive Committee Update

Happy new year, we hope you have all had a great Christmas break. In addition to the usual bits and pieces we deal with on a day-to-day basis, we have had two main focuses over the last few months – to analyse information from our survey; and to set up meetings with ERO and MOE.

In this newsletter:

- ▶ Homeschooling Survey Results
- ▶ Meeting with MOE and ERO
- ▶ Being Reviewed by ERO
- ▶ Analysing Past Reviews
- ▶ Student ID Cards
- ▶ Services We Offer

Homeschooling Survey Results

Thank you so much to the 532 people who completed the inaugural NCHENZ survey, and thanks also for the many lovely comments supporting the Committee. At a quick glance we can see that the typical person who responded to our survey is homeschooling one or two children and has been doing so for up to two years. Their main motivations to homeschool are so that their child can learn at his or her own pace, they want to have a more flexible lifestyle, they want a closer family unit with values more central, and they are dissatisfied with the school system. Approximately half of the respondents describe their homeschooling approach as mixed (eclectic). The second most-popular approach was identified as natural learning/unschooling, followed by “school at home” as the third most favoured style. Most intend to home educate through both the primary and secondary school years. A massive 90% of us belong to local support groups and 86% use social media to interact with other homeschoolers.

Most of the respondents have made between one and three exemption applications, and most completed their application without assistance. Sixty percent of respondents were not asked for additional information on their last exemption application.

The vast majority of respondents (96%) have not be reviewed by ERO since 2009 when the complaints-based review system was implemented. Of the 4%

who have been reviewed, most passed the review with no changes needed to their homeschooling programme, while a small number had changes recommended and then a follow-up review (which they passed). A quarter of respondents had previously been reviewed under the old routine-reviews system, pre 2009. In answer to the question “Would you prefer regular reviews?” 10% said yes, 57% said no, and 33% are unsure.

Meeting with MOE and ERO

Just before Christmas we were able to confirm meeting details with MOE and ERO. Both meetings will be held on Wednesday 12th February. MOE are still confirming who will be in attendance; ERO will have five of their regional managers in attendance. We will have four Committee members at both meetings. We are investigating the possibility of NCHENZ member groups and individual members being able to teleconference into the meeting as observers, if they wish. Please let us know asap if this would be of interest to you as it will take some organising on our part – email info@nchenz.org.nz. We are in the middle of putting together an agenda for each of the meetings, based on the main issues identified from the survey as well as feedback from members (a letter went out to all members about this on 1st January so please check your Inbox if you haven't read it, or email us for a copy if you haven't received it). Thanks very much to those who have replied already.

Being Reviewed by ERO

In light of some recent information from homeschoolers who have been reviewed, we have updated the information on our website (<http://www.nchenz.org.nz/ero-reviews/>). If you receive notification of a review from ERO, we strongly recommend as a first step that you ask MOE for the documentation which outlines the reason for the review (ie. the letter of complaint). This will enable you to ensure the reason for the review is valid and that the appropriate procedures are being followed by MOE.

Recently a homeschooling family challenged the decision to review them – the original complaint had been a phone call and not made in writing, the family's close association with another family (who had had a negative review a few weeks prior) was noted on their file when this is completely irrelevant, and some of the notes made by an ERO officer embellished the

original complaint. MOE considered the points in the letter written by the family and withdrew the decision to review them.

Another homeschooling family has discovered they potentially could have avoided an extremely negative review experience, and ongoing issues following the review, if they'd also requested the original complaint letter and other documentation. There were several points in the complaint letter that they could have challenged, however now that the review has happened they will need to follow a different process.

Analysing Past Reviews

Since the regular review system changed to a complaints-based system in 2009, we have been interested in whether or not unschoolers are over-represented in the number of failed reviews. As ERO don't identify families by their homeschooling approach, we made an Official Information Act (OIA) request to get copies of the review reports so that we could see if there are any particular patterns in the types of families who have negative or failed reviews. Our first OIA was declined under several sections of the Act – we successfully challenged this and our request was accepted. We received the review reports just before Christmas. Our preliminary findings are that unschoolers and natural learners are NOT over-represented either in being reviewed or having a negative outcome from the review. We have further analysis to do on this and will come back with more information in the next newsletter.

Student ID Cards

NCHENZ offers students ID cards which can be used for public transport discounts, cinema concessions, truancy officer approaches, etc. An intangible benefit is the sense of belonging to a wider group that a child can feel when owning or carrying a card. This service is available only for children who have a current exemption certificate from the Ministry of Education. Orders are processed once a month on the 20th of the month, and the card is valid until 31 December 2014. The cost is \$10 per child for NCHENZ members, \$15 per child for non members. Please complete the application form on our website: <http://www.nchenz.org.nz/student-id-cards/>.

Services We Offer

Please note: While NCHENZ is appreciative of being able to make the following special offers to our members, this should not be seen as an endorsement or promotion of any of the programmes. We offer these programmes as a service to our members simply because the opportunities have arisen and we think our members will be interested.

Mathletics: We have secured a reduced subscription to Mathletics for \$42 per child for a year, instead of the usual \$99. Spellodrome can be included for \$25 per year (instead of \$50). We will only be doing one intake in 2014 starting in about February/March 2014 and we are currently just over three-quarters full. If you want to enrol one or more of your children please email their name, birthdate, and exemption number (if 6yrs+) to mathletics@nchenz.org.nz. More information can be found here: <http://www.nchenz.org.nz/mathletics/>.

Reading Eggs: We are taking enrolments for Reading Eggs starting in March/April. Reading Eggs is a popular literacy programme, so far we've enrolled over 300 homeschooled children. Normally just over \$95, our subscription price is \$22 for one year per child. Our subscription includes Reading Eggs (generally for children aged 3-7yrs), Reading Eggspress (generally 7-13yrs), and the Library (1000+ e-books). The Reading Eggs subscription can be used for a preschooler as long as you *genuinely intend* to homeschool that child; any child aged over six years must have a current Exemption Certificate from the Ministry of Education. More information can be found here: <http://www.nchenz.org.nz/reading-eggs/>. To subscribe to the Reading Eggs offer, email readingeggs@nchenz.org.nz with your child's name, birthdate, and exemption number (if 6yrs+).

Studyladder: Studyladder provides a vast range of educational resources for homeschoolers, parents, and teachers; and they have agreed to give an extra six months of access for free to NCHENZ members who join Studyladder before 31st December 2014 ... so you would receive 18 months membership for the price of 12. You can check out the Studyladder website at www.studyladder.co.nz. To access this offer please see our website: <http://www.nchenz.org.nz/studyladder/>

Language Perfect: This is an online self-directed learning tool for mastering vocabulary. Students are tested on their reading, listening and writing skills in an extensive range of words, verbs and common phrases available in over eleven languages. Language Perfect currently offers Chinese, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, Maori and Spanish. The subscription fee is normally \$100, however homeschoolers receive 70% discount and can subscribe for \$30. Please see our website for enrolment information: <http://www.nchenz.org.nz/language-perfect/>

Who are we?

Set up in 1998 for the purpose of advancing the cause of home education in NZ at a national level, we are the only national homeschooling body in NZ. NCHENZ's intention is to be neutral and we have no affiliation to any political or religious group. NCHENZ is run by an elected Executive Committee – Nina Wright (co-ordinator), Nadia Sole (co-ordinator), Meredith Connolly (government liaison), Karen Grant (individual memberships, supported by Helen Campbell), Debbie Thomas (group memberships), Astrid Hendra (minutes secretary, treasurer), Sue Pace (id cards), and Lynn Peake (correspondence secretary). We are all homeschooling our own children and volunteer our time for the benefit of NCHENZ.

If you are not yet a member of NCHENZ please join, it's free – just go to <http://www.nchenz.org.nz/online-form-for-individual-membership/>.