Submission to **Education and Science Select Committee**

Submission on the **Education Amendment Bill**

Submission from the **Sabbath Rest Advent Church (NZ)**

- We, the **Sabbath Rest Advent Church (NZ)**, ([www.srac.info](http://www.srac.info)) are a charitable trust, an incorporated society, a non-profit organisation comprising approximately 13 active NZ members who are committed to supporting our educational program and vision. The body of local and international members consult together weekly in a meeting forum. The NZ branch of the Sabbath Rest Advent Church is supported by many international members, including experienced teaching professionals who are in skype conference with us weekly.
- Our centre is located in rural Kimbolton (Manawatu) sited on 3 hectares of land with orchards and gardens.
- Our educational program currently includes **Little Ark Christian Enviro Preschool** ([www.littleark.co.nz](http://www.littleark.co.nz)).
- Our centre includes **Wholegrain Organics** ([www.wholegrainorganics.co.nz](http://www.wholegrainorganics.co.nz)) registered health food kitchen and shop.
- In addition our centre is currently developing a health treatment centre, **Whaka Ora Health Point**, which follows natural principles.

We would like to support this written submission with an oral submission.
The Sabbath Rest Advent Church (NZ) supports the Education Amendment Bill without modification.

**Who are New Zealand’s Underachievers?**

The government’s goal is to raise academic achievement in New Zealand. The initiative of Partnership Schooling kura hourua is to serve children who underachieve in the current education system. Which children fall into this category of underachievers? While the underachieving groups of Māori, Pasifika and low socioeconomic have had much publicity, at-risk children are found from all backgrounds. We see that “social, socioeconomic and cultural factors mean that there is marked heterogeneity in the risks facing young people across New Zealand.” (Gluckman, 2011, p. viii). We would like to draw attention to the group of underachievers who are struggling with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and other specific learning disabilities (SLDs) and children living in rural communities who are generally less engaged in their academic education. This is a category of underachievement which is not necessarily linked to cultural or economic deprivation, as these students may also come from privileged backgrounds. However this category of SLDs is over-represented in the Maori and Pasifika populations.

The tail of underachievers includes a proportion of New Zealand’s gifted children who are easily mis-identified as behavioural problem cases. Gifted children from low socioeconomic or culturally diverse backgrounds are often overlooked or misdiagnosed, while gifted children from all backgrounds are at risk of underachievement and low morale.

*“In particular, the Gifted Kids Programme is addressing the needs of Maori and Pacific Island gifted children, with up to 60 per cent of students in the Day Schools [opened 2001] made up of this previously overlooked group.” says Gifted Kids Programme Executive Trustee, Christine Fernyhough (2002).*

*“Gifted students who have difficulties with reading, handwriting, spelling, mathematics or organisation, often appear to be doubly disadvantaged during their school years. The learning problems are usually physical, cognitive or behavioural in nature, and can cause students to become frustrated as teachers try to remediate the weaknesses, allowing few opportunities for their talents to surface. This can leave a child feeling confused, isolated and sometimes at risk.” (Johnson 2005, par. 2, “Abstract”)*

If these SLDs remain unaddressed it often leads to social dysfunction and psychological adolescent morbidity. From research in 2005:

*“It was concluded that adolescents with learning disabilities have a less positive academic self concept, experience higher levels of trait anxiety and have higher prevalence of somatic complaints. Adolescents with learning disabilities had high rates of depression and alarming rates of suicide.” (Bourne 2005, par. 7, “Depression”)*

*“Early diagnosis and intervention in children with learning disorders makes a substantial improvement in self confidence and social competency which helps them in opening
We also recognise that underachieving is a result of 20th century thinking in a 21st century world. The challenge is to educate how to think not what to think, in order to become lifelong learners, ready to solve problems that don’t yet exist and fill jobs that don’t yet exist. If the student does not see the relevance of their learning to today’s world, they are in danger of disengaging.

- **Work Experience** - *section 158S and clause 13 section 31G*
  The current education system heavily emphasises the academic. In this environment many of our young people become underachievers. As Albert Einstein said, “The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” A paradigm shift in our thinking is needed for the creative approach that is necessary for future survival in our changing world. A more appropriate emphasis that applies academic learning to practical skill development becomes more purposeful and meaningful to the student resulting in motivation and achievement. Therefore we wholeheartedly support section 158S allowing the school to authorise students to go on visits, take courses or obtain work experience.

  *Clause 13 section 31G,* stating that partnership schools kura hourua may provide a component of a secondary-tertiary program also supports this idea. A case in point is the work and study dual vocational training system (TVET) used in Germany. Here students, 16+ years, undertake an apprenticeship and attend “Berufsschule” (vocational school) where they have a parallel program of two days in school and three days at paid work. This model has met with success, as reported in *Bloomberg Businessweek,* where Dolgow (2012) states that “Germany has the lowest jobless rate among young people of any industrialised nation in the world - around 7 or 8 percent” (par. 1). Some other countries wanting to boost employment rates for their young people are now adopting this model.

- **Personalised Learning** - *clause 9(2) new section 65DA*
  We appreciate the scope the bill offers for highly effective, flexible, personalised learning, which addresses not only the tail of under-achievers, but is a good educational approach for all students. The concept of multi-timetabling as proposed in the bill, supports personalised learning in that students have the possibility of customised timetables, catering to their career learning path. For example, a student interested in carpentry may study the academic content in the mornings, and have practical carpentry experience in the afternoons, while another student may do the reverse. This parallel approach to learning helps with the students’ motivation and general morale as it brings relevance to their academic learning.

- **Special Character** - *section 158B (3) (f)*
  In order to address the varied needs of all underachievers, it is beneficial to offer a rich diversity of schools, including schools with a particular religious, philosophical or other
distinguishing characteristic. The wairuatanga of a faith-based educational environment can inspire young people to develop their potential and empower the mana of children from diverse cultures to live by their highest values. As Gluckman states in his Letter to the Prime Minister (2011), “It is also clear that programmes initiated early in life to reduce later risk are generally more effective – and more cost-effective – than attempts at remediation.” (p. viii)

- **Specialist Teachers - Clause 26**
  In order to improve the NZ national outcomes we need to employ teachers who are passionate about, and have mastery of their subjects, while also being proficient in the area of “social intelligence” (Lucas & Claxton, 2010). Therefore we need to source teachers who provide an inspirational and motivating model catalysing the learning process. Students can form mind-blocks to particular subjects, such as mathematics, which can be turned around by an educator who is adept at socialised learning, enthused by the subject, and brings varied resources and effective teaching practices. We need teachers who “will promote cross-discipline involvement in the development of our capacity to think and learn.” (16th International Conference on Thinking, Wellington NZ, 2013, par. 2, “Conference Theme”)

The bill’s proposal allowing the employment of teachers who do not hold practicing certificates provides opportunity and flexibility. We want the best teachers we can get for each subject. This proposal opens up the possibility of inviting specialists who bring inspiration, whether in academic or practical subjects. This has been a positive point of difference for private schools which commonly follow this practice across the country with success.

- **Practical Wisdom**
  All students need an education that fits them to cope well with the changing needs of this world. They need diversity of thinking, rather than conformity, in order to develop the critical and creative capacity for 21st century challenges. The flexibility offered to partnership schools kura hourua supports their ability to furnish such an education; in particular, clauses referring to flexible timetabling, employment of “unregistered” but specialist teachers, work experience and tertiary components.

- **School Rules - section 158H (1)**
  We support the flexibility of a partnership school kura hourua to make any rules the sponsor deems necessary or desirable for the management of the school. 158H (1). This is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the school that enables it to function effectively, with the necessary mutual respect and cooperation between staff, students and whānau.

- **Financial Accountability - section 158J**
  We support the need for financial transparency of partnership schools kura hourua - that the annual financial statements be prepared in accordance with the partnership school
kura hourua contract, be audited by a chartered accountant, and given to the Secretary as agreed in the contract. We see these conditions as necessary to prevent the misuse of the Government’s financial support.

- **Review - section 158C (1) (b)**
  We support the need for review, such as by ERO, so that partnership schools kura hourua are accountable for their performance. It is essential that there are adequate assessments of the children’s success at reaching their targets.

**Summary**
Although there are many successful graduates of the New Zealand school system, as evidenced by ex-pats internationally, the discrepancy between these and the large tail of underachievers needs to be addressed.

To get a new result, new input is needed - input that breaks away from our entrenched academic ideologies, while keeping what works.

The concept of Partnership Schools kura hourua is a very positive approach to the NZ Education System. The flexibility of this initiative enables fresh, new ideas to be implemented, that not only directly improve achievement, but build the mana of learning power in all students. Becoming engaged, lifelong learners readies young people to face the changing world with courage, resilience and creativity living up to their highest values and principles. Through a collaborative approach students are facilitated to engage in relevant learning that contributes to global problem-solving.

The world-wide shift that we are currently experiencing in educational thinking challenges us to employ a new approach to learning in today’s schools. A partnership school kura hourua is the appropriate framework in which to implement such 21st century learning.

We support the efforts of the government to address the learning of the children who are falling between the cracks and we want to endorse this Partnership School kura hourua concept as the best way to rectify the shortcomings of the current system and raise academic achievement throughout New Zealand.
References


