



Department of  
Education, Employment and Training

Western Metropolitan Region

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14 November 2000

Dear Laurie

I am writing in response to your intention to introduce a Steiner Education stream into Footscray City Primary School in 2001, and to inform you and the School Council that I am unable to support such a proposal.

I refer you to Executive Memorandum No. 2000/002, **Specialised pedagogical and methodological approaches to education**, from Don Tyrer, Acting Director of Schools, where it states,

*While course planning, curriculum organisation and classroom practice are clearly the provinces of schools, they must be undertaken within the parameters of the CSF 11 and other Departmental requirements such as the Early Years program.*

Following consideration of a report undertaken by two regional curriculum officers on the Steiner curriculum in relation to the CSF 11, and further discussions with yourself, and Senior Officers, I am not convinced that the curriculum requirements can be met satisfactorily.

In addition, I understand that the Steiner education stream has been promoted through community and newspaper advertising. I again refer you to Executive memo No. 2000/002 that clearly states,

*While it is appropriate for schools to implement new and revised approaches to curriculum, it is not appropriate for schools to advertise or promote by name any particular specialised pedagogy or methodological approach to education.*

I therefore express my concern to both yourself and the School Council that your proposal to introduce a Steiner education into Footscray City Primary School does not comply with DEET policy.

Yours sincerely

GREG GIBBS  
ACTING REGIONAL DIRECTOR

cc. Footscray City P.S. President



# Report on Steiner Education

## Introduction.

Based on the information available on the Steiner website (<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/>) and the printed information provided via Footscray City PS, there would appear to be little in common between Steiner Education and the State system as represented by CSF11/Victorian Early Years Programs.

Indeed, given the Steiner philosophy of rejecting 'the demands of the Government' and the outline of curriculum given in the handout, we find it extraordinary that the Steiner Parent group at Footscray City PS could undertake to report on Literacy benchmarks and to have students at CSF Level 4 by the end of Grade 6.

### 1. Early Years Aspects:

Steiner education would appear to be the antithesis of the philosophy of the EYS program which provides a structured framework for the development of literacy skills from Prep to Year 4. For example, in response to a question about dealing with children who already know how to read when they enter first grade, the Footscray provided document says:

*In working towards balanced development, it is necessary to consider more than intellectual achievements .... Early intellectual awakening can result in the weakening of a child's vital forces, manifesting in frequent colds or other illnesses.*

Thus the "dreamy state of childhood" is necessary to be healthy and intellectual development in the first 7 years can result in difficulty relating to other children and is thus discouraged.

Elsewhere, the Steiner literature states that there are no textbooks in the first five years of school, children learn to read from their own writing in class 2 and that reading instruction is deferred until the second grade "signalled physically by the change of teeth". Further, because this education focuses on producing "an internal motivation to learn" there is "no need for competitive testing and grading". This doesn't seem to fit with Footscray City's commitment to undertake PEAP and to submit Benchmark results at the end of the year as a systemic requirement. We fail to see how the Steiner stream of a school could align itself with the school's Early Literacy Plan.

## **2. Arrangement of the School Program and Curriculum:**

According to the Footscray handout, students in a Steiner setting are "taught in main lesson blocks of about two hours per day." This is to cover all KLAs. We doubt that this would allow for a two hour Literacy Block, and a one hour Numeracy Block as recommended for Prep-4, let alone study of the other 6 KLAs!

The 'Overview of Main Lesson Curriculum' only cover a small section of CSF11 and certainly does not cover the essential learnings of CSF11. For example: numeracy only covers some aspects of Number in Class 1 and 2, - none of the other Strands. None of the curriculum appears in the Curriculum Focus Statements which sets out the Learning Environment to be provided within Victorian State schools. The attitude to students' exposure to the media and ICT appears in direct contradiction.

Steiner education is based on a philosophy of cocooning children from the world to develop their imagination and learn to conjure up ideas. This is in direct contrast to, for example, the SOSE CSF11 where the emphasis is on study of family "as a starting point to help them understand the world in which they live." [SOSE CSF11 p.16 Curriculum Focus Statement Level 1]

## **3. Starting a Steiner School.**

We are concerned by the Recommendations about setting up Steiner schools contained on the website. The main benefits are cited as:

- The cost of the teacher is paid by the state
- The facilities are provided by the school
- The school will "carry" the reduced numbers in the Steiner stream.
- Free administration.

We assume that this is at the expense of class sizes in the rest of the school. (<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale/newschl.html>)

We recommend if the Region is seriously considering this application for establishing a Steiner stream at Footscray City, that they research other Victorian State schools that have adopted Steiner streams - particularly Moorrabin Heights PS as the website claims they have a long waiting list.

Pat Hincks and Janette Cook