

April 27th 2004.

An Open letter to the Federal Minister of Education Brendan Nelson

I am writing to you as a concerned parent first and former teacher second:
I believe that schooling and education could be improved the following ways.

- ❖ Less cognitive approach to schooling - value the trades, musicians and craftspeople more than now.
- ❖ Place a priority on building emotional intelligence and social and moral competencies so that kids can form more effective relationships which is the most important issue in being resilient and happy in life.
- ❖ Create safer, quieter and smaller schools where kids can be happier and thus learn better. If not smaller schools please continue to work towards smaller classes.
- ❖ Teach thinking skills, accelerated learning techniques and memory strategies so that all students can become smarter not just the bright ones.
- ❖ Lighten up in schools - have more laughter and fun so that kids can feel connected and that life really is worth living. Especially beneficial for boys.
- ❖ Keep a better balance between work and play in primary school - Kids should be allowed to be kids as long as possible. More play based non-competitive physical activities to encourage our kids to be more active and help reduce the obesity problem at the same time as learning how to lose and cooperate and share.
- ❖ As an idealist I would love to see a more holistic approach that allows for the nurturing and caring of our kids in our scary world! Can we please pay the committed teachers who really make a positive difference to our kids lots more money so that they stay and feel valued by our society?

Sir if this happened I wouldn't see five year olds who want to die, anti-depressants as a normal part of adolescence, boys underachieving in work and failing in relationships especially by means of domestic violence, and maybe no need for teenage girls to be so keen to stab themselves as often as I do.

Best wishes

Maggie Dent CMC

Author of "Saving Our Children from Our Chaotic World:
Teaching Children the Magic of Silence and Stillness."