

# Annual Conference Resolutions 2008

## Curriculum assessment, league tables and SATs

1. This SEA Conference notes the continuing support by the government for the use of league tables and national curriculum tests ("SATs") in state schools. In its defence, the government claims that it has raised educational standards among pupils and ensured greater public accountability of schools. However ever increasing concerns are being expressed by educationalists, parents, teachers, writers .... about the detrimental effects of the national curriculum testing regime.

This Conference believes that these detrimental effects result in intolerable pressures upon children, teachers and headteachers. The current assessment arrangements and the 'teach to the test' atmosphere in schools do not encourage genuine learning and do not ensure that every child achieves their full potential.

Therefore this SEA Conference calls on the National Executive:

- to contact the teacher unions and other educational bodies ,
- to act collaboratively in opposing the current national curriculum assessment practices,
- to set up an Anti SATs and League Tables Alliance to campaign more effectively to abolish the assessment system,
- then to establish an alternative approach to create genuine learning which is both enjoyable and enriching for children.

## Bullying and Disability

2. This Conference believes that bullying is a major contributing factor to the reluctance of parents of disabled children to send them to mainstream schools. However, if bullying can be dealt with, disabled and non-disabled children can grow up in harmony alongside each other making a major contribution to improving the attitudes towards disabled people in future generations.

We therefore welcome the issuing of guidance to schools by the DCSF on preventing the bullying of disabled children and the introduction of a pilot peer monitoring scheme. However, we believe that the following additional measures are also needed:

- a. Compulsory reports to Governors on disablist incidents as is already the case with racist incidents.
- b. Compulsory disability equality training in all schools.
- c. Funding for bullying prevention work in all schools.

## Academies

3. The Association reaffirms its belief in democracy and social equality in education. Accordingly it is totally opposed to the government's policy in promoting academies. It urges local authorities and universities to give no support to the government in this.

## University admissions

4. Bias in elite university admissions: SEA notes that the inability of state institutions to secure places for students at elite universities is failing to be tackled, especially at Oxbridge. SEA notes that at the most discriminatory university, Oxford, only 53.7% of the intake this year came from the state sector, against a target of 72.9%; Cambridge only achieved 55%. SEA concludes that the current policies of the Office of Fair Access are not working, and resolves that it will work with like

minded groups concerned with the unfairness of the current system to investigate the reasons for the situation and to propose solutions.

### **Initiative overload**

5. SEA notes with approval the Select Committee report criticising overtesting and overexamining pupils in English Schools and Colleges. SEA notes with concern government intentions to continue these policies. SEA further notes that the pace of change in curriculum, testing and examining strategies is intensifying and fears both pupils and teachers will suffer from initiative overload.

SEA therefore resolves to campaign for a Commission on Testing, Examining and Curriculum reform, to examine the effects of the permanent revolution in these areas on pupils, teachers and the educational system as a whole, preferably in the form of a Royal Commission but if not by a body clearly independent of the government. SEA will work with like minded bodies who share these concerns. SEA further calls for the suspension of all initiatives not already implemented pending the report of this commission.

### **National Educational Institute**

6. The SEA calls upon the government to establish a National Educational Institute.

### **Extended schools programme / Research**

7. SEA calls for the Government to provide a reliable, recurrent and adequate funding flow for the extended schools programme.

8. SEA calls upon the Government to take research evidence seriously, consult a range of professional opinion and organise open debate before launching new policies.

### **Early years learning**

9. SEA disagrees most strongly with the system of targets embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and with the over emphasis on the use of phonics in the Language and Literacy Settings. This top down curriculum with its emphasis on testing, tick sheets and results is not appropriate for young children's learning. We believe that this critical developmental stage is best served in an environment with an emphasis on play, where social and intellectual skills are fostered and children develop communication skills and vocabulary. Only after this should the next stages of Language and Literacy be offered.

### **Comprehensive education**

10. The argument in support of comprehensive education should remain at the top of the agenda of the SEA.