# Nurturing Gifted and Talented Children

A Parent-Teacher Partnership

Ministry of Education Learning Media Wellington

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The Ministry of Education has developed this book to provide parents of gifted children with information that could be useful to them as they help to support and guide their children's learning. The Ministry has made every effort to ensure that the websites referred to in this book were current, relevant to the topic, and live at the time of publication. However, the Ministry cannot guarantee that the non-Ministry of Education websites referred to in this book will remain viable throughout the book's useful life. We suggest that readers refer to the Ministry of Education's Online Learning Centre, Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) at www.tki.org.nz for up-to-date details on programmes and websites relevant to gifted and talented children. The independent websites referred to in this book were included because of their relevance to specific areas of the text and because they offer readers a broad range of information. However, they do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ministry of Education.

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# Foreword



This is an interesting and useful book for all parents and teachers of gifted and talented children. It reflects the questions families often ask and provides information about identifying giftedness. It suggests ways parents and teachers can work in partnership to support the learning of gifted and talented children.

The New Zealand Government is committed to the goal of ensuring that all young people are supported in their learning to reach their full potential. Gifted and talented children do have special learning needs. Together we can help our most talented students to maximise their potential by providing appropriate support and guidance. As a nation, we all have a stake in their success.

I acknowledge and thank the authors and all the parents, teachers, and community groups who contributed to this book. The result is a comprehensive resource that will help us to ensure the best educational opportunities for our gifted and talented children.

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Hon. Chris Carter Minister of Education

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# **Introduction**



# Introduction

In New Zealand, gifted learners are found in every classroom and across all cultures and socio-economic groups. They are children who, with the right support and guidance, go on to contribute in a range of important areas of New Zealand society.

Hon. Steve Maharey, former Minister of Education Welcome to conference delegates at Rising Tides: Nurturing Our Gifted Culture, 2006

In 2001, the Hon. Trevor Mallard, Minister of Education, appointed a working party on gifted education. This working party recommended that a book be published to help parents support their gifted and talented children and to assist parents, schools, and teachers to form positive partnerships.

Jill Bevan-Brown and Shirley Taylor were contracted to write this book on behalf of the Ministry of Education. To ensure that it contained information useful to parents of gifted children, they consulted widely with hundreds of parents via advisory and representative focus group meetings, individual interviews, and a questionnaire posted on the Gifted and Talented Community section of the Ministry of Education's Online Learning Centre, Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI). Parents were also encouraged to share their stories – the joys and the concerns; the benefits and the frustrations of parenting gifted children – and many parents gave permission for their experiences to be included in this publication. To respect their privacy and ensure the anonymity of these contributors, all names and defining details have been changed in the scenarios and quotes included over the following pages.

The writers have focused this publication on the topics that came up most frequently in the consultation process. They have also tried to cater for the needs of a diverse audience. The first three sections of chapter 1, Understanding, Identifying, and Nurturing Giftedness, give some background to the concept of giftedness, identify the characteristics of gifted children, and outline ways of identifying giftedness. This information is provided especially for parents who think their child is gifted but are not quite sure and are seeking clarification. Some parents may choose to skip this initial information and go straight to the suggestions on how to nurture a child's gifts and talents provided in the fourth section of chapter 1. Parents who are worried about particular aspects of their child's development may like to delve into the section on meeting social, emotional, and cultural needs and challenges or check out the questions and answers section at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 2 focuses on the development of parent-teacher partnerships. When working with teachers, it is useful to know what the education system can possibly provide, and this chapter offers information about how the education system relates to gifted students.

Appendices 1 and 2 list a selection of recommended support services and resources for parents and gifted children respectively. There is a wealth of excellent information available both nationally and internationally. In these appendices, readers will find reference details for further valuable resources.

# What Do We Mean by Gifted and Talented?

Many different terms are used to describe gifted children, for example, "gifted", "talented", "special abilities", "exceptionally able", and "highly creative". Popular opinion often associates "giftedness" with high intelligence and "talent" with a high level of performance in such areas as music, art, craft, dance, or sport. However, this is an artificial distinction. It is possible to describe someone as gifted in art or dance and conversely as talented in mathematics or writing.

Some overseas models and definitions differentiate between the two terms by referring to "giftedness" as the exceptional ability or creativity that one is born with and "talent" as the developed use of that ability.

For convenience and simplicity, in this publication, we have relied on "gifted" as a generic term to cover all discussion of children with special abilities, occasionally reverting to other terms in the interests of readability.

Similarly, the words "parent" and "teacher" have been used as convenient, generic terms to describe a wide group that may extend to caregivers, whānau/family members, teacher aides, principals, and so forth. Also, while we realise that parents who read this book will have children who range in age from the very young to teenagers, we have used the term "children" to apply generically to this wide age range. However, where suggestions and information are targeted to a particular age group, the age range has been specified.

The following two icons appear throughout the book:



This indicates information that readers might like to reflect on in relation to themselves and/ or their child or some action readers can take that is particularly focused on their child.

This heralds sources of additional information that readers might like to follow up if they are particularly interested in the topic under discussion. There are many great websites that provide valuable information for the gifted and talented; however, the nature of the Internet means that websites and their details are changing all the time. For this reason, this document only refers to those websites that are crucial to the details discussed in the text. Readers can find reference to other useful websites on the TKI website at: www.tki.org.nz/e/community/gifted

Given that the focus of this publication is on meeting the needs of gifted children, it seems appropriate to leave the final words in this introduction to a gifted child.

When I first heard "gifted", I didn't really know what it was, but I remember thinking "primo" cos everyone likes gifts! But then I've found out it isn't always good, like when my friends get jealous ... then I want to give my gift back, thank you! But sometimes it's great, like when I got on the Future Problem Solving team and we won. I just wish it could be like that all the time.





Chapter 1: Understanding, Identifying, and Nurturing Giftedness



In order to find out whether your child is gifted or not, first you need to understand what you are looking for. So, what exactly is "giftedness"? Opinions vary on what constitutes "giftedness"; however, most people agree on the following three points:

- Being gifted means being exceptional in one or more areas compared to other people of a similar age.
- Giftedness is inherited (nature) but is also developed by external influences (nurture).
- Giftedness can be found among people from all cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic groups and among people who have physical, sensory, and learning disabilities.

The areas of debate relate to: how exceptional a person must be to be considered gifted; in what areas giftedness is recognised; whether nature or nurture is more influential; and how giftedness can be reliably identified.

Many years ago, these were not such controversial issues. It was assumed that if children were gifted, their giftedness would become evident at an early age, and for people like the eighteenth-century composer Mozart, who was recognised publicly as having a unique gift for music by the tender age of five, this was certainly true. Then in the early twentieth century, intelligence tests were first developed and used to determine people's levels of intelligence. Those who gained an intelligence quotient (IQ) score of 130 or more were considered to be intellectually gifted. As time progressed, it was discovered that these tests had a number of limitations. While they successfully identified giftedness in terms of being able to think logically, they were less able to identify giftedness amongst creative, divergent thinkers and those from minority cultural groups. During the latter half of the twentieth century, such a narrow definition of giftedness was challenged, and other definitions came to the fore, two of which have been particularly influential in New Zealand.

	General	l perfomance areas
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Mathematics Philosophy Religion Life Sciences Visual Arts Social Sciences Language Arts Physical Sciences Law Music Movement Arts



### Special performance areas

Demography	Electronic Music
Micro-photography	Childcare
City Planning	Consumer Protection
Pollution Control	Cooking
Poetry	Ornithology
Fashion Design	Furniture Design
Weaving	Navigation
Playwriting	Genealogy
Advertising	Sculpture
Costume Design	Wildlife Management
Meteorology	Set Design
Puppetry	Agricultural Research
Marketing	Plant Science
Game Design	Animal Learning
Journalism	Film Criticism
etc.	etc.
	Micro-photography City Planning Pollution Control Poetry Fashion Design Weaving Playwriting Advertising Costume Design Meteorology Puppetry Marketing Game Design Journalism

Reproduced with permission of the author, Professor Joseph Renzulli, National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut, 2005 From studies of gifted adults, Professor Joseph Renzulli noted that people who have been successful in life possess three particular traits – high levels of ability, creativity, and task commitment. Renzulli believed that gifted children either already have these three traits or are "capable of developing" them and "applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance" (Renzulli and Reis, 1985, page 28).

This introduces two important aspects of giftedness:

- 1. Giftedness is recognised in relation to what people value, and this can change over time and across cultures.
- 2. You can have apparent giftedness or potential giftedness.

Professor Françoys Gagné provided a model of giftedness that expands on this idea.

# GIFTEDNESS = top 10%

### Natural Abilities (NAT)

### Domains

# Intellectual (IG)

Fluid reasoning (induct./ deduct.), cristallized verbal, spatial, memory, sense of observation, judgement, metacognition.

# Creative (CG)

Inventiveness (problem-solving), imagination, originality (arts), retrieval fluency.

### Socioaffective (SG)

Intelligence (perceptiveness). Communication (empathy, tact). Influence (leadership, persuasion).

### sensoriMotor (MG)

S: visual, auditory, olfactive, etc. M: strength, endurance, reflexes, coordination, etc.

### Chance (CH)

# CATALYSTS

### Intrapersonal (IC)

### Physical/mental characteristics

(Appearance, handicaps, health) (Temperament, personality traits, well being).

### Self-management (-→Maturity)

Awareness of self/others (Strengths & weaknesses, emotions)

# Motivation/volition

motives, values) (Resource allocation, adaptive strategies, effort)

# Developmental Process Informal/formal learning & practicing (LP)

Positive/negative impacts

### Environmental (EC)

Milieu: physical, cultural, social, familial, etc. Persons: parents, teachers, peers, mentors, etc. Provisions: programs, activities, services, etc. Events: encounters, awards, accidents, etc.

### TALENT = top 10%

### Systematically Developed Skills (SYSDEV)

Fields (relevant to school-age youths)

Academics: language, science, humanities. etc.

Arts: visual, drama, music, etc.

**Business:** sales, entrepreneurship, management, etc.

**Leisure:** chess, video games, puzzles, etc.

**Social action:** media, public office, etc.

Sports: individual & team.

**Technology:** trades & crafts, electronics, computers, etc.

Reproduced with permission of the author, Professor Françoys Gagné, Department of Psychology, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada, 2004 Professor Françoys Gagné believes that gifted people are born with a biological potential that will allow them to develop high ability in one or more of the areas listed under "Giftedness" in the diagram above. This could be considered a person's potential talent. In the middle column, Gagné lists the catalysts needed to transform their natural gifts into exceptional performance in the areas listed under "Talent = top 10%".

So, for example, if a child shows exceptional creative ability at an early age and they are encouraged by their parents, given art materials or musical instruments to experiment with, and enrolled in art or music classes (environment), and if they enjoy art or music and have real "stickability" (intrapersonal and selfmanagement), then it is likely their natural gift will lead them to create wonderful works of art or musical compositions. Likewise, if the child's creativity leans towards mechanical objects and they are encouraged and given opportunities to play with construction toys and pull apart old TVs, their gift might lead them to make significant technological breakthroughs in the future. However, if they are not given encouragement and opportunities to develop their natural gifts, a child's potential might never be realised.

In considering the question "Who are the gifted and talented?", the Ministry of Education's policy statement *Initiatives for Gifted and Talented Learners* makes the following points:

- Gifted and talented learners are those with exceptional abilities relative to most other people.
- These individuals have certain learning characteristics that give them the potential to achieve outstanding performance.
- Giftedness and talent can mean different things to different communities and cultures in New Zealand.
- Students who exhibit characteristics of giftedness or talent have learning needs that are significantly different from those of other children.
- They require different learning opportunities and may need emotional and social support to realise their potential.

Adapted from Ministry of Education, 2002, page 2





Today teachers in New Zealand are encouraged to consult with parents and to develop a definition of giftedness for their early childhood service or school that fits within the Ministry of Education's conceptual framework and best reflects the nature of their particular learners and community. Such a definition is likely to be multi-categorical and multicultural and to include both potential and demonstrated giftedness. Given that our understanding of giftedness has been constantly evolving over the years, it is safe to assume that it will continue to evolve as more challenges emerge and our knowledge expands in the twenty-first century.



If you would like to find out more about the nature of giftedness and about various popular definitions, check out the following material.

Bevan-Brown, J. (2004). "Gifted and Talented Māori Learners". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press, pp. 171–198.

McAlpine, D. (2004). "What Do We Mean by Gifted and Talented? Concepts and Definitions". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press, pp. 33–66.

www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/handbook/stage1/def\_who\_are\_gt\_e.php (This website contains a discussion of definitions and links to information on Gagné's and Renzulli's definitions, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory, and Solow's article "Parents' Conceptions of Giftedness" from *Gifted Child Today*, vol. 42 no. 2. Accessed 16 June 2006.)

# think about

Consider the various concepts of giftedness that you have read about so far in this book. Do any seem to describe your child? How?

# Characteristics of Gifted Children

Experts have identified certain characteristics that are commonly associated with giftedness. The following list was prepared by Dr Linda Silverman.<sup>1</sup> Dr Silverman maintains that her twentyfive characteristics apply to a wide range of gifted children who have a variety of talents and come from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. However, we must stress that although checklists of characteristics can be helpful in alerting you to the possibility of giftedness, a gifted child is an individual, whose unique set of personality traits may not conform to any suggested list of attributes.



- 1. Reasons well (good thinker)
- 2. Learns rapidly
- 3. Has an extensive vocabulary
- 4. Has an excellent memory
- 5. Has a long attention span (if interested)
- 6. Is sensitive (feels hurt easily)
- 7. Shows compassion
- 8. Is a perfectionist
- 9. Is intense
- 10. Is morally sensitive
- 11. Is strongly curious
- 12. Perseveres (when interested)



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Have you deaned that bedroom ye

- 14. Prefers older companions
- 15. Has a wide range of interests
- 16. Has a great sense of humour
- 17. Is an early or avid reader (if too young to read, loves being read to)
- 18. Is concerned with justice/fairness
- 19. Has keen powers of observation
- 20. At times, demonstrates a judgment that is mature for age
- 22. Is highly creative
- 23. Tends to question authority
- 24. Has facility with numbers
- 25. Is skilled with jigsaw puzzles

Adapted with permission from Dr Linda Silverman, founder and director of the Gifted Development Center

<sup>1</sup> Dr Linda Silverman's characteristics list is available on www.gifteddevelopment.com/ (Retrieved August 2005 from the Internet.)



Consider your child's behaviour in respect to Silverman's twenty-five identified characteristics of giftedness. Silverman maintains that if a child demonstrates eighteen or more of these traits, it is very

likely they are gifted. However, please remember that, as an individual, your child will have their own set of traits that may not be reflected in Silverman's list.

While most of the characteristics listed above are selfexplanatory, some aspects of perfectionism, intensity, and sensitivity are explored later under The Challenges of Being Gifted, page 52. You can also check out the resources listed on page 19 for detailed information about characteristics.

# What Do These Characteristics Look Like in Real Life?

One wet and chilly Saturday, my husband and I decided to take the two boys and the dogs to a nearby pine forest to collect pine cones for next winter's fire (a goal helps both boys focus). We arrived in the dripping forest with raincoats, gumboots, and bags and set off to look for pine cones. As we walked, we found a number of different toadstools. While three of us began to collect our pine cones, our seven-yearold, Toby, returned to the car for a pencil and some paper and conducted a detailed survey of toadstools, using tally charts, carefully counting each toadstool, and marking the different varieties. We had given him a bag and, at intervals, we directed him towards gathering pine cones, but to no avail. His imagination was fixed firmly on toadstools and could not be shifted.

There are three important points to note when thinking about the characteristics of giftedness:

- Many experts maintain that "asynchronous development" is relatively common among gifted children. Simply put, this means that a child's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development are at different stages. Most frequently, this uneven development results in considerable differences between a child's intellectual abilities and their physical, emotional, and social skills.
- Characteristics of giftedness can vary greatly between children, even between children in the same family. Sometimes, because younger siblings have very different personalities and different areas of strength from their already-identified gifted older brother or sister, their giftedness may be overlooked.
- 3. Although most of the characteristics listed by Silverman are positive in nature, they may not always seem so. For example, your child's keen powers of observation may not be appreciated when they point out that Grandma always wears the same old shoes or that often you don't practise what you preach.



Ministry of Education (2000). "Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students". *Gifted and Talented Students:* 

Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools. Wellington: Learning Media, pp. 17–25. Available at www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/ handbook/stage1/char\_gt\_students\_e.php

Moltzen, R. (2004). "Characteristics of Gifted Children". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press, pp. 67–92.

Porter, L. (2005). "Signs of Gifted Development in Young Children". *Gifted Young Children: A Guide for Teachers and Parents*, 2nd ed. Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin.

Willard-Holt, C. (1999). Dual Exceptionalities. ERIC EC Digest #E574. Accessed 19 June 2006 from: http://ericec.org/digests/e574.htm

# **Identifying Giftedness**

Hohepa appears to be a lot more advanced than the other tamariki at kōhanga reo in some areas, but he's behind them in others, so he can't be gifted, can he?

Is knowing all the alphabet at age one unusual or not?

Mei Ling is only two and builds incredible building block models. Could she be gifted?

I think Ben is gifted, but his teacher doesn't agree because he struggles to read and his writing is illegible. Is she right?



Wouldn't it be great if there were a special thermometer you could use to find out if your child were gifted? Unfortunately it's not that easy, especially when identifying giftedness in young children, in gifted children who also have learning problems, or in children who have a discrepancy between their ability and what they do (usually called "gifted underachievers").

It is understandable that parents feel the need for confirmation of whether their child is gifted or not, but it is important to remember that the purpose of identification of a child's special abilities should not be about assigning a label of "gifted", but rather it should be to unearth the nature of those abilities and more importantly to help parents, caregivers and teachers nurture these abilities at home, school, childcare or wherever.

Riley, n.d.

If you believe that your child is gifted, there are a number of things you can do to help confirm this in order to support them as they progress in their learning.

# **Developmental Milestones**

Gifted children tend to develop a range of skills earlier than usual. To help you gauge whether or not your young child is exceptional for their age, you can compare their developmental milestones with those listed in various milestone charts. There are two types of milestone chart. One contains age-related developmental scales, and the other places development on a continuum.

An example of an age-related milestone chart developed to help identify gifted preschoolers can be found on pages 176–177 of *Your Gifted Child: How to Recognize and Develop the Special Talents in Your Child from Birth to Age Seven* (Smutny et al., 1989). You can find examples of other age-related and continuum milestone charts for different ages and areas of development on the Internet. However, when comparing your child's development with entries on such charts, keep the following points in mind.

- Don't look for just one or two instances of advanced ability but rather try to determine a broad, consistent pattern of early development in one or more areas.
- Milestone charts are only guides. Each child is unique; their development can progress at uneven rates in different areas and at different times. For example, some parents have described how their gifted children appeared to be slow in developing language but then suddenly began talking in full sentences.
- Milestone charts are often not appropriate for gifted children who have disabilities.
- Like other information contained in this book, you should only take on board the parts that are relevant to your lifestyle and culture. Most developmental scales are based on the norms, values, and practices of Western society. If one or more milestones are inappropriate for you or relatively unimportant within your culture, then simply ignore them.



# think about

You may not remember when your child achieved particular milestones, so it can be helpful to note down your child's various accomplishments in

a diary. Also, try to build up a portfolio of their "first attempts" and their most imaginative and detailed creations, for example, their first attempt at writing their name, early drawings, photos of constructions, recordings of original stories and songs, lists of interests and questions asked, outstanding research projects, and so forth, with each achievement dated for future reference.

# People Who Can Help You

There are a number of people who could be helpful in assessing your child's giftedness. For example, other parents whose children have been identified as gifted will be able to tell you about the process they went through to identify their child's giftedness and may alert you to indicators of giftedness that you were unaware of, providing you with more examples of giftedness to consider.

If you don't know any parents of gifted children to speak with, you could contact the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children (NZAGC) (see appendix 1 for contact details) and ask if they have a member in your area who would be happy to meet and talk with you. The NZAGC website includes a discussion forum where you can read about other parents' experiences and post your own queries.

You might also find it helpful to talk with people who have expertise in the area in which you believe your child is gifted. For example, if you think your child has a musical or artistic talent, ask a local artist, music teacher, or musician how their own talents were discovered and fostered. You may even like to share some of your child's work with them.

You could also talk with people who work in gifted education, such as university lecturers, gifted and talented education advisers, and teachers who specialise in teaching gifted children. Such people are unlikely to be able to identify giftedness in your child from a single conversation with you, but they will be able to provide you with valuable information and insights about identifying giftedness.

# **Education Services**

If you believe your child is gifted, and they are at school or an early childhood service, you can ask their teachers for help in identifying their giftedness. Children's learning opportunities are enhanced when parents and teachers work in partnership, sharing information and ideas. Make an appointment to discuss your child with the teacher/s and any others from the school or service who have expertise in giftedness. Take along the portfolio of your child's work described on page 22 and give specific examples of why you think your child may be gifted.

In New Zealand, there are no compulsory identification measures for giftedness, so each service and school can develop their own strategies based on their definition of giftedness. Ideally, the approach chosen will include a wide range of identification strategies and measures used in an environment that enables and encourages a child's gifts and talents to emerge.

# Early Childhood Education

In early childhood education (ECE), teachers may identify a gifted child by the way the child takes an interest and becomes involved in the things around them and how they persist with challenge, express a point of view or a feeling, and take responsibility. These key dispositions of children are sometimes observed by using learning stories, where teachers focus on, record, and analyse information about a child's learning experiences. Teachers will build on and extend a child's learning experiences in a way that is responsive to the child's strengths and interests. *Kei Tua o te Pae/Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004 and 2007) will guide them in strengthening the child's learning.

# think about

You can ask to see and discuss your child's learning stories and/or other assessment information. You can also ask your child's teacher to conduct a focused observation of

your child and can then arrange to meet with the teacher and discuss your child's learning journey and how you can support this together in partnership.

# **Primary and Intermediate Schools**

Primary school teachers frequently use observation to identify gifted students and to monitor the learning and achievements of their students. Such observations can be carried out informally or by using characteristics-observation checklists or rating scales. Schools use a variety of lists and scales, but one frequently used measure developed specifically for New Zealand children is the *Teacher Observation Scales for Identifying Children with Special Abilities* (McAlpine and Reid). The McAlpine and Reid scales list characteristics in five areas: learning, creative thinking, motivation, social leadership, and self-determination. You can view these scales at www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/handbook/stage1/char\_behaviours\_e.php

There are also a large number of tests that can be used to help identify giftedness. These include: teacher-made tests, usually relating to specific subject content; standardised tests that have been developed and "normed"<sup>2</sup> by outside experts (one example being the Progressive Achievement Tests [PATs] developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research); and Ministry of Education assessment tools, such as School Entry Assessment, curriculum exemplars, and AsTTle. New measures are being introduced regularly.

Teachers may also use the assessment of products, performances, and portfolio items to identify gifted children.

Schools are encouraged to include parents, whānau/family members, peers, and the children themselves in their identification process. This may involve nominating a child for a particular enrichment programme or completing rating scales and questionnaires to identify areas of interest and ability.

# think about

You could ask your child's teacher about the identification strategies used in their school. If the school has a gifted education coordinator, it would be a good idea for the teacher to invite them to

join the discussion. Ask to see any assessment information the school has for your child, including any work samples. Discuss what all the assessment information means. What is the teacher's assessment of your child's ability? Share why you think your child might be gifted and work with the teacher and co-ordinator to devise a way of confirming whether your child is gifted or not.

<sup>2</sup> "Norming" involves using the test results of large numbers of children of the same chronol to establish a score that is considered average for that age group. Gifted children often sco three, or more years in advance of their chronological ages in normed tests.

# Secondary Schools

Secondary schools use similar identification strategies to those used in primary and intermediate schools, with many of the same instruments being employed but at a level appropriate to older students.

It is common for emphasis to be placed on identifying a student's giftedness when the student first enters secondary school in year 9. Information received from primary and intermediate schools, including teacher comments, test results, previous involvement in enrichment programmes and, in some instances, the student's primary school portfolio may be used to decide which class a student goes into. In addition, some schools conduct student self-assessments and seek parent input about their child's ability. For example, parents may be invited to describe their child's special abilities on the school enrolment form. If you are asked to do this, for your child's sake, don't be shy about stating their particular strengths.

At year 9, secondary schools use a variety of assessment measures to help them identify giftedness. These can include a combination of the school's own assessment tools and nationally available tests. As they progress through the school, students' performance in teacher-made tests and national assessment measures, such as the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), are also taken into consideration. In particular, earning "Excellence" grades in NCEA testing can be a potential indicator of giftedness.

Observation guided by a variety of checklists and rating scales continues to play an important role in secondary schools. Teachers may use their own subject-specific checklists and/or commercially produced measures, such as the Purdue Academic Rating Scales (Feldhusen, 1995). With their specialist subject knowledge, secondary school teachers are most likely to recognise giftedness in their particular area of expertise.

# think about

It is likely that by the time your child reaches secondary school, you will have had many indications of their giftedness and will

probably know that they are gifted. If, by chance, your child is a late bloomer and you are still unsure about whether or not they are gifted, you could follow the advice given for approaching primary and intermediate teachers for assistance.

# **Psychological Assessment**

It is sometimes useful to seek more formal consultation and an assessment from an educational psychologist if you believe your child might be gifted but:

- they are not achieving to their potential;
- their abilities may be hidden by disabilities or specific learning difficulties;
- they are thought to have Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Asperger syndrome, and you are unsure if this is correct.

When meeting with an educational psychologist for the first time, take along any relevant information you have (or offer to send it in beforehand). Such information may include a portfolio of examples you have been building up, a milestone diary, a note of any characteristics you have observed and, if your child is at school, reports and other relevant educational data.

As part of an assessment, the psychologist is likely to chat with your child, ask them about themselves, their educational experiences, and what they enjoy doing. The psychologist may conduct some informal activities, such as games or problem solving, to get to know your child. They might use a standardised test or inventory. This could be an IQ test, which is useful in identifying intellectual giftedness and can also identify particular areas of strength or weakness. Of course, all tests have limitations. Most have not been developed for the New Zealand context. Some will be culturally inappropriate, some will be inappropriate for children whose first language does not match the language of the test, and some, such as IQ tests, allow only limited opportunities to see creativity. Non-verbal tests do not rely on language and are generally less dependent on previous academic experience. If your child's first language is not English and you wish to have your child tested, nonverbal tests or non-verbal sections of IQ tests may be appropriate.

Even the very best test can only present a snapshot of your child at a particular point in time. Children's performance can be affected by their health, motivation, personality, prior test-taking experience, prior learning opportunities, relationship with the tester, mood, and so on. So all test results should be interpreted bearing in mind such influences. However, it is worth noting that high scores on IQ tests do indicate intellectual potential, and a child will not gain a high IQ score by chance.



Following an assessment, it is reasonable to expect that the psychologist will explain their assessment report and make some recommendations to you and, if applicable, your child's teachers. If they used an IQ test, the psychologist should give a breakdown of the subtest/indices/factor/scale scores and explain the significance of each element of the test. While you might be keen to know the total score, the information provided about relative strengths and weaknesses and about the ways in which your child processes information is the most useful. Recommendations based on this information can be used for nurturing your child's gifts at home and school.

An individual's total IQ score can vary greatly from test to test and between versions of tests. Some tests, for instance, place more emphasis on processing speed than others. Gifted children generally score lower on more recent versions of tests, so 130 is no longer regarded as a cut-off point for giftedness. A score of 120 is often a strong indicator or scoring at the 99th percentile on two or more subtests. Looking at indices or scales within tests is often a better indicator of giftedness than the overall IQ score.<sup>3</sup>



If you want to know more about IQ and other tests, how to interpret test results, the pros and cons of testing, current theories of

intelligence, and so on, you can consult the following sources.

Ford, D. (2005). "Intelligence Testing and Cultural Diversity: Pitfalls and Promises". *The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented Newsletter*, Winter, pp. 3–8.

Porter, L. (2005). *Gifted Young Children: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*, 2nd ed. Crows Nest, Australia: Allen and Unwin. (Chapter 8 includes a section on IQ tests.)

Riley, T. "Should I Get Him/Her Assessed and How?" Retrieved 20 June 2006 from the Internet at: www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted /interact/faq\_riley/faq2\_e.php

See also appendix 1 for information on how to access an educational psychologist.

<sup>3</sup> This information is from the symposium on the Comparison of Assessment Techniques in the Identification of Gifted Learners, Sixteenth Biennial World Conference for Gifted and Talented Children, New Orleans, 7 August 2005.





# **Cultural Issues**

Many New Zealand schools use assessment procedures that are based on Western concepts of giftedness and ways of doing things. Although early childhood education assessment procedures are guided by the bicultural curriculum *Te Whāriki*, it is possible that the special abilities of children from other cultures will be overlooked either because the identification measures used are not culturally appropriate or because those making the identification are not aware of other cultural perspectives of giftedness. The situation is further complicated if the child's first language is not English.

Generally, teachers are becoming more aware of these issues and are introducing measures to ensure that gifted children from different cultural groups are not missed. If cultural issues are of concern to you, you could arrange a meeting with your child's teacher to ask how cultural aspects relating to giftedness are addressed at your child's school. You may like to take along whānau/family members to support you at this meeting and to contribute their cultural knowledge to the discussion. The section Cultural Issues and Giftedness in appendix 1 provides a list of readings about identifying and providing for gifted children from minority cultures. Talking with university lecturers, teachers, and parents who have particular expertise in cultural areas can also be helpful. In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the best method for identifying giftedness is a team approach that uses multiple methods in a responsive environment. There are many people who can be called on and many different strategies that can be utilised to find out whether your child is gifted. However, as one parent noted, identification must be kept in perspective:

Although I wasn't 100 percent sure Anja was gifted, I had a damn good inclination she was. For a period there, my life became consumed with getting an official diagnosis to prove I was right.

I read everything I could find on the subject, had meetings with a string of teachers and psychologists, and frequently found myself shedding tears of utter frustration. In the end, when she was diagnosed as gifted, it was a bit of an anticlimax! Although I don't regret getting this diagnosis, thinking back, it would probably have been wiser to spend less time and energy chasing it and more on learning about ways I could help my daughter develop her talents.

Identification is a means to an end – the end being to provide appropriate experiences matched to your child's interests, strengths, and needs. Regardless of whether or not your child has been identified as gifted, they should be given plenty of ongoing opportunities to have their abilities nurtured and developed.



McAlpine, D. (2004). "The Identification of Gifted and Talented Students". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*,

ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press, pp. 93–132.

Ministry of Education (2000). "Identification of Gifted and Talented Students". *Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools*. Wellington: Learning Media, pp. 26–34. Available online at: www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/handbook/ stage1/ char \_gt\_ students\_e.php



www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment (This site provides a comprehensive view of assessment procedures and tools used in New Zealand schools. It has a parent section, where you can download a brochure [in seven different languages] that explains up-to-date assessment tools such as asTTle, exemplars, NCEA, and Assessment Resource Banks. Although it deals with assessment in general rather than identifying giftedness in particular, this is an excellent site and even has suggested assessment questions for parents to ask their children and teachers.]

www.nzcer.org.nz/default.php?cPath=31\_208 (The New Zealand Council for Educational Research site contains information on many assessment tools that are used in our schools.)



# Some Basic Requirements

Gifted children are often likened to tall poppies. Just as poppies need certain basic conditions to grow and bloom, so too do gifted children. These conditions include:

# 1. A Nurturing Environment

Just like any other child, your child's first needs are for love, support, nourishment, shelter, and security. In a nurturing, responsive environment, your child will feel valued and empowered to reveal and develop their gifts and talents.

# 2. Positive Attitudes towards Giftedness and Learning

In their quest for knowledge, your child's behaviour can be demanding, wearying, and even disruptive. It is all too easy to ignore incessant questions or quash enthusiasm for a timeconsuming activity. Unfortunately, such actions convey the message that your child's gifts and talents are a nuisance. A better message, of course, is that their gifts, talents, and curiosity are valued and that learning is a worthy endeavour. How better to get this message across than to model it yourself? If a child sees their parents enjoying reading regularly, showing enthusiasm for solving problems, and being eager to learn something new, these habits and attitudes will be affirmed for them.

# 3. Time, Attention, and Patience

It has been said that the most precious gifts a parent can give their child are their time, attention, and patience. Unfortunately, with the everyday demands parents face, these commodities are sometimes in short supply. Careful time management and priority setting may be needed to enable you to spend more time with your child; to listen to them; to share their interests; to encourage and support their learning; to play, have fun, and laugh with them; and to simply relax and enjoy their company.

# Learning Opportunities, Experiences, and Resources

Gifted children require a variety of experiences, opportunities, and resources to challenge them to discover and develop their advanced abilities. These can include:

# 1. Community Resources, Facilities, Programmes, and Events

Look through your telephone book and local newspapers and consult your Citizens Advice Bureau, local council, and other sources of information to find out what is available in your community. If you live in a town or city, you may have access to museums, theatres, art galleries, sports facilities, parks, cultural centres, historic buildings, aquariums, statues, monuments, factories, airports, libraries, and perhaps even a zoo, wildlife sanctuary, or observatory. Not only are these stimulating places to visit, but many provide activities your child can become involved in. For example, wildlife sanctuaries and zoos may have nature trails, and libraries and museums frequently offer holiday programmes or special-interest classes on various topics. Additionally, your child may be able to attend regular sporting events, cultural activities, and musical and dramatic performances. S

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There are also many facilities available to children living in the country. For example, the local or mobile library, stockyards and farm visits, bush walks and marae can all provide resources and experiences to spark an interest and present a challenge. If you have access to the Internet, there are many "virtual" libraries, museums, art galleries, and so on that can bring the world to your own home.

# 2. Clubs, Associations, and Tuition

Check out all your local information sources, including libraries, early childhood services, and schools, for information about what clubs and lessons are available in your area. Many sports, culture, and interest clubs provide activities and experiences that will challenge and extend your child in their area/s of strength.

Some districts have groups set up specifically for gifted children. Contact NZAGC to see if there is an Explorers Club, Small Poppies Play Group, or Support Group for Gifted Children and Their Families in your area. If there is not, you may wish to follow the guidelines on the NZAGC's website to start up a new group.

Experts in gifted and talented development recommend that gifted children be offered opportunities to work and play with other gifted children. Gifted support and play groups provide such opportunities. You can nurture any friendships formed in these groups by encouraging the children to meet more frequently – with sleepovers, birthday parties, outings, and so on.

Membership of the NZAGC includes a subscription to the magazine *Tall Poppies: Magazine of the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children*, access to a well-stocked library, regular meetings, guest lectures and, most importantly, contact with other parents of gifted children who can be a mine of information about resources, activities, and challenges children face.

A further organisation worth considering for gifted adolescents is Mensa. Mensa is an international society open to individuals with an IQ in the top 2 percent. Its aims are to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity, to encourage research into intelligence, and to promote stimulating intellectual and social opportunities for its members. If you wish to find out more about what Mensa can offer, check out their website at: www.mensa.org.nz

You may also consider arranging private lessons for your child. Music is one area where individual tuition is relatively common. Singing and instrumental tutors often advertise in local papers or school newsletters. If your child shows promise in a particular area, administrators in relevant clubs may be able to recommend a private tutor for those extra tennis, drama, or chess lessons.

Additionally, you could check out clubs, organisations, and associations that, although not traditionally for children, may consider junior membership or hold talks, exhibitions, or demonstrations that your child could attend. These organisations usually advertise their meetings and events in local newspapers and include contact details for any inquiries. For example, a talk about endangered wildlife at an upcoming Forest and Bird Society meeting, the Astronomical Association's comet viewing, a local bridge or chess club tournament, the local historical society's trip to an abandoned pā site, or an air club open day might be of interest to your child.

# 3. School-based Events

Some schools offer enrichment opportunities within school time and out of school, including extra tuition, trips, and holiday programmes for gifted children. These are occasionally run in conjunction with universities or community organisations. You may receive information about these activities in school newsletters or through class notices. Some schools have other systems for notifying parents of upcoming events and additional learning opportunities for their children. Some parents have specifically mentioned the following as being very helpful: playcentre parent-education programmes, guest speakers at parent-teacher meetings, and functions and workshops organised by their child's one-day-a-week programme. (See the section Differentiation of Learning in Schools on page 100 for more information about these schools.)

# 4. People

Look out for opportunities where your child can meet and talk to people with a range of expertise and experience. This will alert them to many different occupational possibilities and challenges they might consider for their future. Also don't forget to draw on the wisdom of age - grandparents, great-aunts and -uncles, and so forth often have years of experience and the time to share it. Gifted adults have reported that in many cases they have been profoundly influenced by particular people from their childhood who provided inspiration, motivation, encouragement, and expertise. If your child has interest and ability in a particular area, it would be wonderful if they had a mentor to tutor, support, and encourage them. On an informal basis, this could be a relative, teacher, or friend who provides ongoing guidance and motivation within the context of a special friendship. Formal mentoring is more complex and usually involves scheduled meetings, goal setting, skills training, and so on. If you are unable to find a mentor, you might consider online mentoring or a virtual role model.



For information on online mentoring, check out:

www.nwrel.org/mentoring/index.php m/products/ementoring.html

and www.epalscorp.com/products/ementoring.html



When looking for a virtual role model, you might suggest that your child research someone they greatly admire. How did this person manage to get to the top of their

field of achievement? What qualities did they need to succeed? Reading books about gifted people who have triumphed against great odds can also be inspirational.
#### 5. Resources

Toy libraries, second-hand bookstalls, garage sales, markets, school galas, "for sale" newspaper columns, and various trading websites can all be sources of reasonably priced resources.

You could aim to:

- make your home a book-rich environment containing a good range of both factual and fictional books;
- make library visits a regular part of your family's routine;
- read to your child often;
- listen to recordings of books with your child;
- model enjoying reading;
- select books that reflect your child's interests.

An article on parenting your gifted reader in *Tall Poppies: Magazine of the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children* (2005, vol. 30 no. 1, pp. 14–17) provides guidelines for selecting books for gifted children to read, including suggestions for some age-appropriate books. It also includes information on how you can support a gifted reader and develop their ability to read critically.

Information about particular books for gifted children can also be found in appendix 2.

Other basic equipment for young gifted children includes a good supply of art materials, blocks, play construction materials, some types of musical instrument, balls, cards, board games such as chess and various word games, and puzzles such as jigsaw puzzles, codes, logic problems, and number puzzles.

Because gifted children are often not challenged (either intellectually or physically depending on their area/s of ability) when playing games with their peers, provide opportunities for your child to play with older siblings and adults, including yourself. Encourage them to create their own games and teach others how to play them.

#### 6. Technology

The Internet is a wonderful source of information for personal interest and research projects. Search engines such as Yahoo<sup>TM</sup> and Google<sup>TM</sup> can locate information on almost anything. It is advisable, however, to monitor your child's Internet use carefully to ensure that the material they are accessing is safe and appropriate. Appendix 2 suggests many Internet sites that gifted children might find interesting, while appendix 1 contains a list of informative sites for parents to check out.

There are also some excellent computer programs available that will allow your child to conduct simulated science experiments, design graphic masterpieces, and play chess against a robotic expert. New, challenging programs are coming onto the market every day but, as these are often expensive, it is wise to do your homework before buying anything. You could:

- talk to teachers and staff in computer shops that sell educational software;
- consult computer catalogues;
- read unsponsored Internet reviews;
- see what programs are recommended on websites for gifted children;
- ask other parents of gifted children what their children enjoy;
- take home programs for your child to trial before you purchase them.

Take a similar approach with tapes, videos, CDs, and DVDs (often these resources are available from local libraries and toy libraries).

TV programmes, particularly nature and history documentaries, can be both stimulating and informative. Children who are gifted in the physical domain may benefit from watching TV coverage of world-class sporting events. The motivational value of these events can be very powerful.

# think about

Don't forget to factor in some time for fun and relaxation with your child.

While you are, no doubt, keen to provide your child with many different opportunities to develop their gifts and talents, you should be wary about overdoing it. In their book *The Over-Scheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap*,<sup>4</sup> Alvin Rosenfeld, Nicole Wise, and Robert Coles warn parents against providing their children with so many activities that the children do not have any "down time" to reflect, ponder, and daydream. Your child may use such quiet moments to develop brilliant ideas, or they may just need "blob-out" time to recharge their batteries. Rosenfeld, Wise, and Coles believe that occasional boredom is actually beneficial as dealing with it can stimulate gifted children's creativity and imagination.

## Assisting the Development of Beneficial Skills, Habits, and Attitudes

Gifted children need a variety of different skills, habits, and attitudes in order to make the most of their learning opportunities. You can help your child by:

- encouraging creativity, divergent thinking, and high-level thinking skills;
- 2. facilitating learning and teaching study skills;
- 3. attending to personal qualities, feelings, values, and attitudes;
- 4. developing language and communication skills.

#### 1. Encouraging Creativity, Divergent Thinking, and High-level Thinking Skills

As mentioned earlier, Joseph Renzulli considers creativity to be one of three defining characteristics of giftedness. For creativity to grow, Joan Dalton and David Smith (1986) claim that eight basic skills are needed. Those skills are:

- fluency (generating many ideas and possibilities);
- flexibility (looking at things from different viewpoints and responding in a variety of ways);

Go to www.oprah.com/tows/pastshows/tows\_past\_20010525.jhtml for more information on A. Rosenfeld, N. Wise, and R. Coles, *The Overscheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap.* This site also contains a test you can take to determine whether or not your child is overscheduled.

- originality (coming up with unusual, clever ideas and combining known ideas in a new way);
- elaboration (expanding something or an idea to make it more interesting or complete);
- curiosity (being inquisitive and questioning);
- complexity (identifying gaps in information or situations and finding different and complex alternatives);
- risk taking (having the courage to share ideas that may expose you to criticism or failure; taking a guess);
- imagination (putting yourself in another place or time; building mental images; feeling intuitively).

You can foster these creative skills by asking your child openended, challenging questions and through the various games, activities, and everyday happenings your child is involved in. Here are some examples.

- Your teenage daughter wants to sleep over at her friend's house, but you are not keen on the idea. Ask her to convince you by "brainstorming" all the reasons she should be allowed to sleep over (fluency). Then ask her to come up with as many reasons as possible why you might be against the idea (flexibility).
- Challenge your seven-year-old son to come up with an invention or system that will help you and/or him speed up your and/or his household chores (originality and elaboration).
- Your ten-year-old daughter really wants to have a horse. Suggest that she prepare a case for being given one (risk taking), outlining all the consequences of owning or not owning a horse (complexity).
- 4. Lie on the ground with your young child to look up at the sky. Ask him what the various cloud shapes remind him of (imagination), what he thinks the clouds are made of, and why he thinks there are different types of clouds (curiosity).

Edward de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* (de Bono, 1990) could be used to help your child develop their critical, caring, and creative thinking.





Dr Benjamin Bloom graded thinking skills according to six levels, which are: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating, and they relate to encouraging critical and creative thinking. You could ask your child questions and do activities that challenge them to use the higher-level thinking processes.

The following table represents a discussion that took place between Polly and her father on their way home from an outdoor concert and demonstrates the use of the six different thinking levels. It has been adapted from the ideas discussed in Michael Pohl's book *Learning to Think, Thinking to Learn* (2000) (see Section 1, pages 11–36).

Remembering (recall)	How many acts do you think there were? Let's count them.
<b>Understanding</b> (interpreting, showing understanding)	I wonder why it was called a variety concert?
<b>Applying</b> (using the knowledge)	Let's see if we can sing the words to ""
<b>Analysing</b> (breaking into parts)	How does that compare to the concert we saw on TV last week?
<b>Evaluating</b> (judging and justifying)	Did you think that comedy act was funny? Why or why not?
<b>Creating</b> (combining information and developing new ideas or products)	Would you like to try making up your own act? We could have our dinner outside one night and then watch you perform it.

One way to encourage children to think creatively is to use the SCAMPER model. SCAMPER is a brainstorming technique developed by Bob Eberle (see Eberle, 1982) that uses a checklist system to encourage participants to generate ideas. It consists of seven different thinking processes, each one requiring children to analyse, synthesise, and evaluate the subject they are working on. The seven thinking processes applied in the model make up the acronym SCAMPER – substituting, combining, adapting, modifying, putting to good use, eliminating, and reversing. When applied to the Māori legend describing how Māui fished up the North Island, the model could look like this:

<b>S</b> substituting	What do you think would have happened if Māui had used a fishing net rather than a fishing line and hook?
<b>C</b> combining	How do you think the story might have changed if Māui's brothers had the same personality as Māui (adventurous, cunning, and tricky)?
A adapting	How would the story change if it took place in Alaska?
M modifying magnifying	Retell the story with Māui being afraid of the sea. How would the story have changed if Māui's fish had put up a greater fight?
P putting to good use	How could Māui have used his powers to prevent his brothers from chopping up his fish?
<b>E</b> eliminating	Retell the story with the waka collapsing.
R rearranging reversing	What would have happened if one of the brothers had hooked the fish instead of Māui? Retell the story with Māui not wanting to go fishing and his brothers trying to trick him into going.

You can use SCAMPER in a range of situations, for example, to give a new twist to a family game, to break the boredom on a long car trip, or to liven up a TV news report. When your child becomes familiar with the model, you will probably find them using SCAMPER themselves.



#### 2. Facilitating Learning and Teaching Study Skills

It is often assumed that gifted children have well-developed learning and study skills, such as knowing how to use the library efficiently, taking succinct study notes, listening effectively, organising time efficiently, being able to use a thesaurus, constructing effective questions, being able to structure a well-written report, debating well, observing carefully, evaluating their own and others' work critically, presenting research information in a variety of appropriate forms, and so forth.

Some people believe that gifted children will just "pick up" these skills. This is not necessarily the case; often they need to be taught "missing" skills in order to develop their gifts and talents further. The following are some suggestions for what you can do at home to help develop your child's learning and study skills:

- Establish a regular homework routine for your school-aged child.
- Encourage your child to develop a "working plan" for their various activities, mapping out a realistic timetable for each activity and acknowledging how they intend to tackle different tasks associated with the activity.

- Model responsive listening for your child by listening carefully and obviously (stopping to listen rather than multitasking) and providing appropriate feedback in discussions.
- Praise good organisational skills.
- Discuss your child's activities with them frequently.
- Play games with your child that promote memory or vocabulary development or multiplication skills.
- Ask thought-provoking, challenging questions that guide your child to evaluate critically things they do.

Sometimes your child will need more direct assistance. When you first go to the local library, check that your child knows how the library works. As they learn to read, teach your child how to find specific books and the information they want. Similarly at home, help them to develop skills they need to answer their questions. For example, this may involve teaching them how to use the Internet to find information. It is best to teach learning and study skills when your child needs them and is motivated to learn.

Use situations where you don't know the answer as an opportunity to find out and learn alongside your child.



On a family picnic, Kathy told her son, Matthew, not to drink from the stream because the water was polluted. Matthew challenged this, and a full-scale study of water pollution evolved. This included both Kathy and Matthew learning how to test water samples for types and degrees of pollution. To Kathy's amazement, the stream water scored better than the sample taken from their kitchen tap.

This story is an excellent example of discovery-based learning. Children learn best by being actively involved in investigating topics that have relevance and interest to them. Problem-based discovery learning is particularly effective, especially if the problem is something the child has encountered in their daily lives – what better motivation is there for discovering a solution than being faced with a neighbour's complaint about your drum playing or trying to work out how to give the whole family Christmas presents when you only have two dollars in your piggy bank?

Watch how your child goes about solving problems. If they take a hit-and-miss approach, it would be worthwhile introducing the Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem Solving process (CPS). The CPS is a flexible tool that provides a structured procedure for identifying challenges, generating ideas, and implementing innovative solutions. It was developed by Alex Osborn and Dr Sidney Parnes and comprises six stages. The stages are: objective finding, fact finding, problem solving, idea finding, solution finding, and acceptance finding. By practising and using CPS, children can strengthen their creative techniques and learn to generalise in new situations. You can find out more about this process from: www.eddept.wa.edu.au/gifttal/provision/provparn.htm

CPS can be used by children of all ages. If you have a young child who cannot write yet, you can be their scribe and work through the process with them.

You can also use a variety of research and goal-setting templates that you can "talk through" with your child or have them fill out if they wish. You certainly would not want to do this with all their activities, but these templates can be useful for helping children to plan and focus. Appendix 2 includes a list of resources that contain a variety of useful templates and research organisers.



## 3. Attending to Personal Qualities, Feelings, Values, and Attitudes

Many gifted children are more sensitive than their peers. They often have an intense interest in social, moral, and philosophical issues and a deep understanding of their own feelings. Some children are especially talented in this area, which is known as the affective domain. In fact, emotional giftedness among children is receiving increasing recognition worldwide. How then can you support, encourage, and assist your child's emotional development? Krathwohl's Taxonomy of the Affective Domain (see Dalton and Smith, 1986) explains the major categories of emotional development and offers examples of how parents of gifted children could encourage their child's development.

The categories in Krathwohl's taxonomy represent levels of development. It is important that gifted children have practice at all levels of Krathwohl's taxonomy. However, you should encourage experiences at the higher levels to challenge your child. Everyday opportunities to foster affective development include: discussing controversial news items; resolving sibling and peer conflicts; examining moral issues on TV programmes; and critiquing video and computer games, books and movies, and so forth.

The chart opposite lists each category in Krathwohl's taxonomy and provides sample activities that demonstrate friendship situations that might apply to a young child.

Major categories of the affective domain	The child is supported by:	Sample activity
Receiving	opportunities to sense, experience, and develop awareness of a broad range of feelings.	Your child has just had a disagreement with her best friend. Ask her how she feels.
Responding	opportunities to respond to feelings in a variety of ways.	Encourage your child to show how she is feeling about the disagreement, using some art media. What lines, shapes, and colours will she use?
Organising	opportunities and help to formulate a personal set of values. The child needs to examine, clarify, create, and integrate various values.	Your child has a good friend who is in a wheelchair. Your child enjoys sport and is always being asked to join in games without her friend. Discuss how important the friendship is to your child and all the things your child could do when this situation arises.
Valuing	opportunities to seek and justify values. This involves accepting, preferring, and committing to a value.	Discuss with your child the question of whether it is easier or harder to be friends with people who are younger, older, fat, kind, better, not as good as, disabled, greedy.
Characterising by a value system	opportunities and experiences that help them internalise, review, judge, and live by their personal values.	<ul> <li>Ask your child to:</li> <li>a. draw or list the ten most important ingredients of friendship and explain why they are important;</li> <li>b. draw or list things she has done as a friend.</li> <li>Discuss how (a) and (b) match up.</li> </ul>

Adapted from Dalton and Smith, 1986, pages 59–60

Note: In some versions of Krathwohl's taxonomy, the order of the organising and valuing categories is reversed.

Many books contain activities that deal with moral dilemmas and values clarification or offer role plays, sociodramas, mock trials, games, and simulation exercises that can help your child explore social issues, develop decision-making skills, deal with human relationship problems, develop spiritual sensitivity, and more effectively manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. These activities provide opportunities for your child to practise and develop Krathwohl's higher level processes and, as an added bonus, can be a source of fun-filled family entertainment.

Other activities you might want to encourage your child to try include:

- researching the lives and values of people who have made significant contributions to society, for example, Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Nelson Mandela, Dame Whina Cooper;
- investigating social justice issues and doing something about an investigated issue, for example, writing to the local council to request that unsafe play areas be repaired and upgraded;
- using their gifts and talents for others' benefit. For example, a musically talented child might perform in a retirement home, a gifted teenage tennis player could help at junior coaching sessions, and a talented artist could become involved in creating a public mural.



## 4. Developing Language and Communication Skills

Many gifted children have advanced verbal ability and a great love of language. This can be supported and extended by providing opportunities for lots of dialogue around the home. Open questions that encourage extended dialogue rather than singleword answers, responsive listening, and a genuine interest in your child's concerns and activities are the ingredients necessary to create an environment that encourages conversation and discussion. In addition to this, you can provide opportunities for your child to explore different forms and uses of language. For example, puppets, masks, and dressing up are means by which young children can experiment with language and different ways of speaking. This can be particularly effective when you join in.

You can capitalise on school-age children's fascination with different languages by getting them to:

- find out what hello and goodbye are in as many different languages as possible;
- write the shopping list in Braille or another language;
- tell a story or joke in sign language;
- find the meaning and origin of family names.

Such activities may spark an interest in learning another language. A local school may offer language classes, or you can check with your local Citizens Advice Bureau or the classified column in your local newspaper for details on courses that are offered around the community.

Help your child explore the richness of language by playing with its many forms, for example, studying anagrams, metaphors, puns, colloquialisms, clichés, personifications, onomatopoeia, alliteration, antonyms, synonyms, homonyms, homophones, unusual vocabulary, palindromes, and so on. In one family, a young son's extensive vocabulary was attributed to the family activity of completing the newspaper crossword each evening. Initially, the boy would contribute a few words here and there, but nowadays, he completes most of the crossword.



Introduce your child to plays and poetry and encourage them to read a wide range of books. The sharing of stories that occurs when parents read to their young children can be continued in the form of book discussions when the children are older. In talking about a story that you have both read, you can deepen your child's understanding and appreciation of literature by drawing their attention to various aspects like plot, setting, mood, characterisation, themes, values, points of view, bias, and author's style. However, don't overdo it. Sharing stories is meant to be an enjoyable, bonding experience, not a literature lesson.

Encourage your child to engage in both creative and factual writing. Giving them a special book, a diary or journal, some fancy paper to use for writing, or calligraphy materials may be all that is needed to get their creative juices flowing. As well as reading their material yourself, look for opportunities for your child to share their writing with others. One mother described how her daughter's writing was given a boost when the daughter won a Mother's Day writing competition, which required her to explain why her mother deserved to be Queen for the day. Songwriting, poetry, and short story competitions plus writing freelance articles for magazines and letters to the editor provide opportunities for your child to write for an audience.



Appendices 1 and 2 list many books and websites where you can find more enriching activities for your child. To get you started, check out:

de Bono, E. (1992). *Teach Your Child How to Think*. New York: Viking.

Books by Michael Pohl, while written for teachers, outline practical examples of higher-order thinking strategies.

Smutny, J., Veenker, K., and Veenker, S. (1989). *Your Gifted Child: How to Recognize and Develop the Special Talents in Your Child from Birth to Age Seven*. New York: Ballantine Books. (See the chapter on creativity.)

www.det.wa.edu.au/education/gifttal/index.htm This website contains English, maths, science, society and environment, and cross-curricular activities using Bloom's and Krathwohl's taxonomies, deductive and inductive reasoning, SCAMPER, CPS, creative thinking, and divergent questioning.



## The Challenges of Being Gifted



Giftedness is often described as being a "mixed blessing". It brings with it the ability to understand complex issues, to achieve at advanced levels, to create, and to excel. But it can also have a down side:

Being sensitive, David often personalises general issues on to himself. For example, the principal talked to the junior school boys about having "better aim" in the toilet. David became terrified of going to the toilet although he wasn't responsible for the mess.

*My* son told me, "*My* friends can't understand the words I use ... They laugh at the [big] words."

*Leila couldn't understand why everyone didn't have a favourite planet like her.*  Gifted children in New Zealand are no different from their counterparts overseas. In the United States, Judy Galbraith (1992) consulted with over three hundred gifted teenagers, who identified the Eight Great Gripes of Gifted Kids as shown below:

- 1. The work we do at school is too easy, and it's boring.
- 2. Parents (teachers, friends) expect us to be perfect, to "do our best" ALL the time.
- 3. Friends who really understand us are few and far between.
- 4. Lots of schoolwork is irrelevant.
- 5. Classmates often tease us about being smart.
- 6. We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life.
- 7. We feel too different and too alienated.
- 8. We worry a lot about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them.

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Of course, many children who are not gifted also face challenges with schoolwork, making friends, parental pressure, and so forth, especially in the teenage years. However, as you can see from the quotes provided above and the eight "great gripes", as well as the usual growing pains and areas of conflict that arise, gifted children face a whole separate set of challenges that are specifically related to their exceptional ability. These challenges are multifaceted. Gifted children often have different interests from their peers". In a study of intellectually gifted girls, Dr Miraca Gross noticed that the girls were less interested in playing with dolls than their peers, and this limited their opportunities for socialisation. As Gross explained, many important "social" lessons and a great deal of peer interaction occur in the dolls' corner of early childhood services (Gross, 1996, page 116).

Other challenges arise directly from gifted children's advanced ability in certain areas, as shown, for example, with the boy whose friends laughed at him because of the big words he used. Gross believes that such children are forced to make a choice. They can follow their interests, curiosity, and natural inclination to extend their abilities and as a consequence forfeit opportunities



to make friends, or they can choose to ignore or hide their interests, curiosity, and ability and thus increase their chances of acceptance from peers and teachers. Whatever path is chosen, negative consequences ensue.

Still further challenges can emerge as a result of gifted children's emotional intensity and heightened sensitivity. These characteristics are important and beneficial aspects of giftedness, and they are exhibited in children who are "full on", enthusiastic, and single minded in the pursuit of a goal; who have passions and are driven to find out and master the world in order to understand it; and who are creative and compassionate.

Emotional intensity in the gifted is not a matter of feeling more than other people, but a different way of experiencing the world: vivid, absorbing, penetrating, encompassing, complex, commanding – a way of being quiveringly alive ... It is emotional intensity that fuels joy in life, passion for learning, the drive for expression of a talent area, the motivation for achievement.

Sword, 2003

Dabrowski (1972) maintains that emotional intensity and sensitivity can be displayed in five different areas called "psychic overexcitabilities". According to Dabrowski, there is a link between these psychic overexcitabilities and giftedness – the stronger the overexcitabilities, the greater the person's gifted potential. Parents can help children to understand their intensity as a positive and integral part of their giftedness while being mindful of possible problems associated with it – remember David, who became too afraid to go to the toilet at school?

In her article, "Giftedness: The View from Within" (Morelock, 1996), Dr Martha Morelock gives another example of heightened sensitivity. Jennie was a four-year-old girl whose grandfather's death had a deep effect on her. Months afterwards, she was still preoccupied with questions about death. Her mother attempted to console her by saying that she need not worry, her parents would live a long time. This answer did not satisfy Jennie, who responded in a trembling voice, "But you don't know, Mommy.



Even children die sometimes. Nobody knows for sure." Morelock explains:

Most four-year-olds would simply accept the mother's reassurance. Jennie, however, is highly gifted. Consequently, her logical and abstract reasoning abilities far exceed those of most four-year-olds. They create for her a reality more complex and threatening than those facing her age mates. Like average four-year-olds, she needs to believe her mother in order to feel emotionally secure. However, her advanced cognitive capacities allow her to see too clearly the faulty logic. She is left vulnerable and bereft of comfort.

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This explanation highlights Jennie's emotional vulnerability and the challenges she faces as a result of uneven (asynchronous) development. While she may have the physical development of an average four-year-old, her intellectual development is equivalent to that of an eight-year-old. She still has the emotional needs of a four-year-old, that is, to feel that her life is secure and predictable and that her parents are strong, reliable, and invincible, but her eight-year-old brain tells her that logically these things cannot be guaranteed. Although she has the emotional intensity that often comes with giftedness, Jennie does not yet have the maturity to handle the intellectual and emotional messages she is receiving. Asynchronous development can also result in gifted children feeling they do not fit in socially – they may be the same age as their peers, but their advanced ability and understanding make them feel guite different. Extreme frustration is another possible by-product of uneven development, an example being the creatively gifted child whose fine motor skills are not developed enough to produce the works of art or music they envisage so clearly in their mind's eye.

Gifted children may also face challenges arising from people's unreal expectations of them. Particularly problematic are expectations that such children should always do their best and achieve high standards in all their endeavours. Often these expectations are not intentional, but because many gifted children





have heightened sensitivity, seemingly innocent comments made by different people can, over time, have a detrimental effect. Think about how comments such as those below could worry highly sensitive children:

Mum:	We're so proud of you – Getting A's in everything except maths, and I'm sure that with a little more effort in that subject, next term your report will show straight A's.
Dad:	With your ability, I can't understand why you're not more responsible.
Teacher:	lt's a shame you took so long to complete your final draft when it's such a good story.
Friend:	Of all people, I thought you would have known what to do.
Sibling:	Well, if you're such an expert, you can do it yourself!

Added to this, many gifted children have a tendency towards perfectionism. They have the mental maturity to be able to envisage the ideal and the intensity to strive for it. This leads to behaviours that can produce amazing achievements or, at the other extreme, feelings of hopelessness. Perfectionism is the engine that drives gifted children's achievements (Porter, 2005, page 69) and enables them as adults to make creative contributions to society. However, such perfectionism can cause a child to become dysfunctional if they:

- think that being gifted means being equally capable in every area and that therefore they are an "imposter" who is not really gifted but is in danger of being "found out" at any time;
- are driven by others' unrelenting expectations;
- fear failure to the point of no longer attempting in an academic, social, physical, or emotional sense. For example, they may avoid social situations, not hand in a science project because they think it is not good enough, or vow not to draw again after throwing away an excellent drawing in disgust because it does not meet their high standards.

If children come to understand driving forces such as intensity and perfectionism, they can channel them positively rather than be controlled by them.

A final potential area of conflict for gifted children is a mismatch between aspects of their ability, development, and performance and the values, expectations, and practices of the cultural group to which they belong. This conflict is not widely acknowledged, possibly because people are often unaware of the important influence culture has on their lives. Culture has been likened to the air we breathe: always there, vital to our lives, but invisible and taken for granted. For example, the Maori culture has a strong sanction against being "whakahīhī" (conceited), as shown with the proverb "Kaore te kūmara e kõrero mõ tāna reka" (It is not for the kūmara to say how sweet it is). A gifted Māori child who knows all the answers to a classroom guiz may feel reluctant to put their hand up just in case their classmates think they are being whakahīhī. It is guite possible that their classmates will not think this at all but until the child knows this for certain. they will experience internal conflict.

think about

Think carefully about the values, expectations, and practices of the cultural group to which you and your child belong. Are there any cultural factors that could

be creating internal conflicts for your child or could be acting as barriers to the development of their gifts and talents?

So far in this section, we have discussed a range of social, emotional, and cultural challenges gifted children may encounter. While it is important to understand the very real challenges that exist for many gifted children, it is equally important to realise that these children are individuals who may experience many, some, or none of the challenges described.

## Responding to the Challenges

If your child is having difficulties, what can you do to help them? Below are a few suggestions for you to consider.

#### Keep Communication Lines Open

It is important to create a home environment where your gifted child feels they can share their concerns with you. When they do, take care not to discount their concerns. Remember that many gifted children have heightened sensitivity and although they may have advanced ability in certain areas, they do not yet have the life experiences to complement these abilities. What may seem to you like a trivial matter may be very serious to them. Your understanding and support can help your child develop resilience.

Dr Linda Silverman (1996) advocates a "support and reframe" approach. This involves:

• listening carefully to your child's concerns; not jumping in to offer advice or solutions but giving them time to explain in detail what they are thinking and feeling. This shows your child that their thoughts and emotions are real and important;

 helping them reframe their concerns. Encourage your child to view behaviours, attitudes, and emotions from another more helpful perspective by asking questions that enable them to gain a better understanding of the concerns they have and the emotions they are feeling. Your questions should focus on the strengths your child has that they can use to help resolve internal and external conflicts. Adapted from pages 128–129

By listening and questioning, you are helping your child to interpret their emotions and concerns. Your prompts will encourage your child's understanding, which can help them to eliminate negative attitudes they may have had about the way they felt. They will learn that their emotions are a healthy reaction to the challenges they face, and this can do wonders for their selfesteem. The discussion you have with your child will not remove the initial cause of their concern, but hopefully, it will give them insight into the cause and instil confidence in their own strength and ability to either resolve or cope with the situation.

If talking to your child about a particular issue does not seem to be working and if you are still concerned about their emotional state, you could tap into other lines of communication. Perhaps there is a friend, sibling, grandparent, neighbour, or teacher your child gets on really well with who can help them. You could also seek counselling support for your child. This may be individual counselling that focuses on helping your child to understand themselves, cope with challenges they face, and make good decisions, or it could be group counselling, where your child shares their perceptions and experiences with other gifted children and learns to develop effective interpersonal skills. You should always seek professional help if your child shows signs of depression, anorexia, or other severe emotional disturbances. Thoughts of suicide can be related to heightened sensitivity and intensity of feeling. Take seriously any suicide threats, selfinflicted injuries, extreme distress, or withdrawal and seek help immediately.



## **Provide Supportive Opportunities**

Some challenges gifted children face can be addressed, reduced, or even avoided altogether by parents providing specific opportunities for their children. As adults, we usually make friends with people who have similar interests and values; that is, we gravitate towards people who have something in common with us and with whom we "fit in".

The same principle applies to gifted children, but because of their advanced ability and interests, it may not be so easy for them to find like-minded friends. By encouraging your child to become involved in the activities run by your local branch of the NZAGC (New Zealand Association for Gifted Children) and join relevant clubs, and by supporting their out-of-school activities, you can provide supportive opportunities for your gifted child to meet potential friends. Additionally, you can nurture your child's budding friendships (both with other gifted children and nongifted children) by providing occasions for friends to get together.

A further point worth noting is that, because of their advanced ability, gifted children often get along better with older children and adults. Consequently, when you are thinking about potential friendships for your child, think broadly. Remember that it is the quality of the friendship rather than the quantity of friends that is important. It is fine for your gifted child to have only one or two close friends.

## Try a Specific Strategy

If you flick through a few books on gifted children, you will discover a wide range of strategies recommended for dealing with the social and emotional challenges these children may face. Some of these strategies are specific to particular situations, while others are more general in nature. A few frequently mentioned strategies are discussed below.

#### Role Play

This is when you and your child act out agreed responses to a particular challenge that is facing them. For example, you might role-play what to do when peers exclude your



child from games or activities. The rehearsing nature of role playing will help your child build confidence and is an ideal way to teach and practise the social skills necessary for successful social interaction.

#### Bibliotherapy

This involves your child reading books where characters face and resolve similar challenges to those your child is experiencing or may come across in the future. Bibliotherapy is described by Judith Wynn Halsted in her book *Some of My Best Friends Are Books* (2002) as:

... a way of helping gifted and talented children understand and cope with growing up different in a world that is geared for the average. It can be used to help them anticipate difficulties as well as give them a basis for self-understanding when they feel alone and misunderstood, or when they are reluctant to use their abilities because it is not popular to be smart.

page 110



## think about

Some of My Best Friends Are Books and the website www.hoagiesgifted.org/reading\_lists.htm list books suitable for bibliotherapy. These are biographies and fiction books that feature

gifted children and adults. You and your child may like to select books that you can read and discuss together. In being able to identify with the characters, your child can experience vicariously the challenges these characters face and can discuss with you the strategies used to meet these challenges. You could follow a similar approach with relevant films.

#### • Stress Avoidance/Reduction Techniques

In order to reduce stress, your child first needs to identify what causes stress for them and recognise their early symptoms of stress. A helpful strategy here is for them to keep a diary for a specified period of time. In this diary, they should note down what makes them feel uncomfortable, what time and where this occurs, what they are thinking and feeling at the time, who else is involved, and any other details they feel shed light on the situation. If your child is young, you could be the recorder or they could use a tape recorder to log their feelings. In her book *The Gifted Kids Survival Guide* (1992), Judy Galbraith suggests three ways of handling stress:

- 1. Eliminate the situation causing stress.
- 2. Change your attitude towards the situation.
- 3. Reduce anxiety by engaging in stress-reducing activities.

Galbraith gives children the following example:

Suppose being teased causes stress for you. Here are three possible solutions. You can: Convince the person to stop teasing you; change your attitude so that teasing doesn't bother you; or accept the teasing and then "work off" the stress it creates by taking a run or talking about the problem ...

page 114

Every person has particular stress-reducing activities that work for them. Together with your child, you can discuss what works for them and make up a stress-reducing menu. It could include things like: exercising (or conversely, slowing down and blobbing out), working on a hobby, reading a joke book or watching a funny video (humour is a very effective stress reducer), listening to music, calling up a friend, or surfing the Internet. Once your child can recognise their early indicators of stress, choosing an activity from their stress-reducing menu may be an effective way of averting a potentially stressful situation.



#### • Handling Teasing

In You Know Your Child is Gifted When ... A Beginner's Guide to Life on the Bright Side (Galbraith, 2000), Judy Galbraith discusses another approach to handling teasing. She advises listening carefully to your child and affirming their feelings by saying something like "I understand that you feel sad and maybe even angry. Teasing really hurts." The next step is to discuss with your child the reasons why people tease and then ask them the following questions:

Who's teasing you? Do you care about this person? Do you care what this person thinks of you? Why do you think this person is teasing you? Are you going to let the teasing bother you? What happens if you do? (You let the teaser determine how you feel.) What happens if you don't? (You take charge of your own feelings.) Practise with your child some ways to handle teasing [for example, deep breathing and counting]. If the teasing is happening at school, encourage your child to talk with the teacher. If the teasing continues, make an appointment to talk with the teacher yourself. [If your child is being bullied at school, always take this seriously and talk with the school.]

pages 88-89

#### • Dealing with Perfectionism

You can encourage and support behaviours and attitudes in your child that channel positive aspects of perfectionism while avoiding its potentially dysfunctional side by:

- discussing the positives and negatives of perfectionism with your child;
- discussing your child's abilities and qualities with them (self-understanding leads to acceptance and helps children recognise that their difference is OK);
- encouraging your child to take responsible risks;
- modelling good risk taking yourself and accepting and learning from your own mistakes;
- praising your child when they handle disappointment appropriately;

- asking your child to explain to you what they have learned from mistakes that will help them with future challenges;
- introducing your child to biographies that can show them how some people have learned and grown from their mistakes;
- discussing with your child the difference between how well they can do something and the importance they place on that activity. You could encourage your child to use a 1–10 scale to assess an activity's importance and their attitude to that activity; for example, they may give themselves a 4 for the quality of their handwriting but only a 2 for the importance of having good handwriting or a 6 for the way they play a piano piece and a 10 for the importance of that piece. By analysing the value of an activity in this way, a child can learn to prioritise where to put their energies to achieve excellence; they don't have to achieve equally in everything.



Are your expectations for your child high but realistic, or are you creating pressure for your child by being "helicopter parents",

hovering over their every action, trying to ensure that they reflect their true abilities?<sup>5</sup> Do you expect your child to behave perfectly, do their best, and achieve at a high level all the time? Are they allowed to have "off days"? How do you react when they fail at something? Because gifted children have advanced abilities and interests, it is easy to forget their physical age. When they do something that you consider to be "silly", do you tell them to act their age? That might just be what they are doing!

6

#### • Building Positive Self-esteem

As is the case with any child, having a positive self-concept is vital for those with gifts and talents. Although many gifted children may view their advanced abilities positively, from an early age they come to discover that others may not. They must learn to deal with the conflicting messages they receive in order to feel good about themselves and their abilities. Having positive self-esteem also enables a child to resist negative peer pressure and cope better with life's changes, challenges, and disappointments.

As a parent, you can help your child understand ways in which they are both the same as and different from other children and so come to appreciate and value their own individuality. You can boost your child's self-esteem by:

- regularly letting them know you love them and appreciate their good qualities;
- treating them with respect and listening carefully to them;
- letting them know that it is their behaviour that is unacceptable, not them, when they do something you disapprove of;
- having family meetings where everyone can share their joys and achievements.

Adapted from Galbraith, 2000, page 92

## think about

Margaret's daughter Mia enjoys her own company, is quite happy to "do her own thing", and is not really interested in "fitting in" with other children. Margaret

believes that gifted children who do not mix well socially develop a poor self-image because adults give them the message that there is something wrong with this and that it is "not okay to be different". She adds that if adults stopped giving this message, there would not be a problem.



Delisle, J. and Galbraith, J. (2002). When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

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White, S. (2002). "Perfectionism: Blessing or Curse?" *Tall Poppies: Magazine of the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children*, vol. 27 no. 2, pp. 6–12.



## Parenting a Gifted Child: Some Common Scenarios and Possible Responses

This section discusses a variety of challenges commonly faced by families with gifted children. The responses provided have been compiled from advice given by parents of gifted children based on their own personal experiences and by experts in the field of gifted education. However, we recommend that you also look beyond the information provided here to help you. Check out the resources recommended at the end of this section and in appendix 1. Consider a range



of opinions and then come to a "best fit" for your child.

My young boy appears to have boundless energy, and I find it very difficult at night getting him to settle down. He only appears to need a few hours' sleep, but the rest of the family need a great deal more. Please help.

Because gifted children's minds are so active, many have difficulty settling down to sleep. It sounds as if your child has this problem. Having a good night's sleep is just as important for him as it is for you, so try out the following strategies. During the day, provide him with plenty of energetic outdoor activities to help use up some of his energy. At night, read a bedtime story to him or allow him a specified time to browse through books himself, but always specify a fixed duration for the reading and give an early warning of when reading time is going to end: "Only five minutes until lights out." You could also try having some soft background music



playing as he, hopefully, drifts off to sleep. Another possibility is to get him to do some "winding down" relaxation activities before bedtime. Techniques such as focusing on his breathing and counting breaths slowly up to ten and then repeating the count can be both physically soothing and mentally calming. If none of these strategies work, call in the cavalry during the day. If you have had a sleepless night because of your active son, ask his grandparents or another relative, a neighbour, or a friend to take him to the park while you have some rest.

I feel really sorry for my older child, Phillip. Mary is three years younger but is more capable than Phillip in most areas. I have noticed lately that Phillip either opts not to join in family activities or, if he does, uses his greater physical strength to bully Mary. I am really worried about their relationship.

Phillip may be jealous of his little sister. He could be opting out of participating in family activities because Mary is better at these than him. Perhaps he is bullying her because physically he has the upper hand. At the root of this problem is Phillip's need to have a positive self-concept and to feel secure and loved. Consequently, be vigilant about affirming the unique worth of both your children. Each will have their strengths that need to be celebrated. What does Phillip do well? Recognise and affirm these things. Provide plenty of opportunities for co-operative and collaborative family activities where there are no winners or losers but where satisfaction comes from all working together to achieve a mutual goal, for example, building a new sandpit, helping Grandma shift, or planning a family holiday together. Give "special time" to both your children. As much as possible, ensure they receive equal amounts of parental praise and attention, reward them for playing well together, and introduce regular family meetings. These meetings can provide an ideal forum for airing grievances in an appropriate and productive manner. They also provide a means by which your children can share family responsibilities, give voice to their opinions, and learn negotiation, mediation, and decision-making skills.

#### How do I handle my three-year-old son's incessant questioning?

Answer his questions simply and honestly. Don't be worried about whether his questions are appropriate for his age – if he is interested and able enough to ask, then he deserves an answer. If you don't know the answers to his questions, look for helpful resource material that will supply the necessary information. If possible, involve your son in this search so that you can enjoy discovering something new together. However, recognise when your son's curiosity is satisfied and be careful not to "overdo" your answers; otherwise, he might just give up asking questions.<sup>6</sup>

## I'm concerned about my child getting big headed because of her ability. I have never actually told her she is gifted just in case this creates a problem. Do you think this is OK?

Experts seem to agree that parents should discuss with their child the fact that the child is gifted. Gifted children are likely to recognise from an early age that they are different from their peers, and it seems only fair that this difference be explained and discussed. Whether you use the word gifted or just discuss the advanced abilities they have is a matter of personal choice. In their book *Guiding the Gifted Child*, James Webb, Elizabeth Meckstroth, and Stephanie Tolan (1982) state that in discussing giftedness, talents, mental quickness, or whatever you like to call it, it is essential that you convey to your child:

that giftedness is not an either/or thing – that is, others aren't "ungifted" but have different abilities. It is also important to convey that we are all interdependent and need to appreciate each person's special strengths.

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Louise Porter also offers some excellent advice in her book *Gifted Young Children: A Guide for Teachers and Parents* (2005):

I begin by asking children whether they ever sat in a shopping centre watching people passing by. They might have noticed that, even though every face is made up of the same ingredients – two eyes, a nose, mouth, chin – no two people look alike. So it is with brains

<sup>6</sup> This answer is based on one provided by a mother of two gifted boys on the TKI (www.tki.org.nz) discussion forum in January 2005.

... Despite the fact that everyone's brain has the same parts or ingredients, all brains work differently. Next I describe to the children that their brain is a machine for learning, going on to say that just as some children can run more quickly, so too some children can learn more quickly than others. Their brain is one of those that can learn more quickly than usual ... Rather than making children self-satisfied or smug, this type of information merely confirms what the children already know about themselves. It allows them to enjoy their deeper understandings and not to feel at fault when other people do not share these ... telling them the facts replaces what may otherwise be inaccurate explanations for the dissimilarities.

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I have watched my child play with his schoolmates and am upset at how bossy and intolerant he can be. If someone is not as good as him, he takes over and makes them feel dumb. He even displays this attitude with me sometimes, correcting my mistakes! I can understand why he can't keep friends. I love him dearly but have trouble with this aspect of his personality. Sometimes I think life would be a lot easier if he weren't gifted.

The reality is your child is gifted; celebrate and value this, do not wish it away. Your child can easily pick up any negative attitudes you hold towards his giftedness, and this will have an adverse effect on him and on your relationship with him. The problem here is your son's bossiness and intolerance, not his giftedness. Because of their advanced ability, gifted children often see the most efficient way of doing something long before their peers and so this is one reason why they can be bossy and even intolerant at times. Tell your son that you realise he may know the best way of doing something, but appeal to his sensitivity to others' feelings and ask how he would feel if his friends always imposed their views and ways of doing things on him. Help him to develop skills of co-operation, collaboration, and compromise. Discuss how stalemates occur when people hold rigidly to their views without ever considering others' opinions or feelings, or possible alternatives. Don't get upset if your son corrects you or shows in

other ways that he is more able than you. Being a parent does not mean that you have to know everything or be best at everything, so don't pretend you do or get upset if you're not. Enjoy your child's abilities and learn from him just as he is learning from you. However, if your son's corrections are delivered in a rude and condescending manner, a lesson or two on politeness, tact, and good manners are in order.

### Religion is very important to our family, and my son is particularly devout. I have heard that there is such a thing as spiritual giftedness. How can I tell if my son is spiritually gifted?

People who are considered spiritually gifted have advanced spiritual intelligence. This type of intelligence is not associated with religion as such but is characterised by traits such as the ability to experience heightened states of consciousness, to use spiritual resources to solve problems, to be virtuous, to transcend the physical and material, and so forth. If you are particularly interested in learning more about spiritual giftedness, an interesting book to read is *Spiritual Intelligence: Developing Higher Consciousness* (Sisk and Torrance, 2001). This book includes chapters on developing your own spiritual intelligence and that of your child. It may be useful in helping you decide whether your son is spiritually gifted and, if so, what you can do to nurture his abilities.

My child seems to live on a roller coaster of emotions. Sometimes she is on top of the world, bubbling with joy and enthusiasm, and at other times she gets so down. She worries about the poor in Ethiopia, injustice in Zimbabwe, cultural conflict in the Middle East, and the effects of pollution and global warming on the environment. It's like she is carrying the whole world's problems on her seven-year-old shoulders. What can I do to lighten her load?

It is possible your daughter is emotionally gifted; she certainly appears to have a heightened awareness of others' needs and a sensitivity to social injustice beyond her years, both of which are important characteristics of emotional giftedness. Acknowledge the reality of her fears and the seriousness of the issues she is
worried about. Let her know that you support and admire her concerns. Encourage her to share her feelings and worries with you at an early stage so that you can discuss them before they become overwhelming for her. Suggest that she choose one particular problem to research. For example, if she studies pollution, not only will she gain greater knowledge about global pollutants, but she will also learn of measures that have been introduced to solve the problem. Often as knowledge increases, fears are reduced. Also, suggest that she come up with ways she can help. If she researched child poverty, perhaps the family could sponsor a World Vision child and your daughter could devise fund-raising activities to support this. While she cannot solve the world's problems, her burden will be considerably lightened if she feels she is doing something to help. You could also encourage her recreational interests and provide plenty of opportunities for fun and relaxation.

## My gifted daughter is quite introverted. Although she is very quiet, withdrawn, and introspective, she seems to enjoy her own company and doesn't appear to be bothered about socialising with others. Should I be worried about this?

Introversion is relatively common amongst gifted children. In fact, one expert, Dr Linda Silverman, maintains that of the 25 percent of the general population who are introverts, 60 percent are gifted (Silverman, n.d.). One of the biggest drawbacks of introversion is that introverted gifted children often escape identification, but this obviously isn't the case with your daughter. Other problems include fewer chances to develop social skills and potentially missed learning opportunities as a result of the child's reluctance to become involved in certain learning activities. Many people would argue that if your daughter is genuinely happy "doing her own thing", then you have no need to worry. If, however, she chooses her own company not out of preference but because she does not possess the social skills and confidence to form desired friendships, then there is a problem. Talk with her and see if you can discover how she feels. Also provide opportunities for her to mix with other gifted children and to form non-threatening social relationships. Closely observe her social interaction skills. If they seem to be weak, some guidance in this sphere may be called for.

## (The topic above is discussed in more detail in the previous section, The Challenges of Being Gifted.)

It has been suggested to me by professionals that my six-yearold son has ADHD [Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder] and that medication would be a good idea. I am loath to do this. I don't like the idea of medication, and also my child's problem wasn't apparent until he started school. From my reading, I believe that he has lots of characteristics of a gifted child. What should I do?

There is overlap between the characteristics and behaviours of a child with ADHD and one who is gifted and creative, especially if they demonstrate characteristics of "overexcitabilities", such as compulsive talking, restlessness, and impulsive actions. Of course a child can both be gifted and have ADHD. However, misdiagnosis does sometimes occur, and you could seek a second opinion to clarify the situation.

You may like to identify the characteristics of giftedness that your child shows and then consider the overlaps and differences between ADHD and giftedness. Also consider *when* your child shows problematic behaviours. If this occurs only in the educational setting, he may be underchallenged. At home, does he read for hours or get engaged in construction or something of interest for long periods of time? Is there any problematic behaviour when he is with talented peers? Gifted children (without ADHD) can concentrate for long periods of time *if* interested and also can achieve consistently in the right settings. An educational or psychological assessment may be useful to ascertain whether he is gifted and it can provide an opportunity to observe his concentration when challenged. For a detailed discussion of the issue, read chapter 2 in the book *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults* (Webb et al., 2005).



think about

The questions posed in this section have centred on the challenges of parenting a gifted child. This is because parents don't tend to ask about the joys. While parents

may be well aware of the delights of parenting a gifted child, the effort and energy required to meet ongoing challenges can sometimes overshadow the positive aspects. Is this true for you? If your answer is yes, sit down and make a list of all your child's strengths and the joys that parenting them has brought.

Your list might contain some of the following strengths, though many more positives exist than are listed here:

- a great sense of humour and a quick wit, which provides hours of laughter and entertainment;
- an eagerness to learn, to solve problems, and to share discoveries that excites and expands the knowledge of all those involved;
- an active imagination and a creative ability that result in the production of wonderful creations;
- a delight in facing new challenges and achievements at a level of excellence that is a source of pride to family members;
- an ability for clear self-expression and confident communication with a wide range of people;
- emotional sensitivity and a deeply caring nature, which result in placing a high value on helping others;
- a sense of fairness, concern for social justice, and leadership ability that have a beneficial influence on peers and siblings;
- task commitment and persistence that are simply awe-inspiring.

This list has been limited to eight points, but you may have noted many more positives. Take a few moments now to reflect on these and to celebrate the fact that you have a gifted child.

It seems appropriate to leave the last words in this section to two parents of gifted children:

There are many joys in parenting gifted children. Many have a deliciously sophisticated and wicked sense of humour, often from a very young age. The ease with which many master a variety of skills can be sheer inspiration and delight for those who appreciate them ... The thought processes and creative methods of approach to the most ordinary of tasks can be fascinating. There can often be such enthusiasm and dedication to a topic that interests them, that they seem totally absorbed by it.



Fraser, 2004, page 518

At three years old, Kate was making continuous 'meowing' noises, on and on. Dad said, "Kate, you meow once more, and you're in trouble, capital T!" Kate hesitated for one second, then let out a little bark!





Fraser, N. (2004). "Parenting". In *Gifted* and *Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed.D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston

North: Kanuka Grove Press.

Webb, J., Meckstroth, E, and Tolan, S. (1982). *Guiding the Gifted Child: A Practical Source for Parents and Teachers*. Cheltenham, Vic.: Hawker Brownlow Education. (This book has frequently asked questions at the end of most chapters.)

www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/interact/faq\_riley/riley\_faq\_index\_e.php (This site contains frequently asked questions about the education of gifted and talented students.)

www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/talented/parents/experts\_forum\_e.php (This site contains the archived answers to parents' questions posed to a panel of experts.)

If these sources do not provide answers to your questions, check out the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children website listed in appendix 1, which provides a forum for you to ask your questions online.

## Summary

#### What Is Giftedness?

- Giftedness means being exceptional in one or more areas compared with one's peers.
- It can be found among people from all cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic groups.
- People who have physical, sensory, and learning disabilities can be gifted as well.
- Gifted children commonly show high levels of ability, creativity, and task commitment.



#### How to Support a Gifted Child

- Many gifted children are more sensitive than their peers.
- Gifted children may face a range of challenges, including being distanced from their peers by their advanced abilities and having to deal with unrealistic expectations.
- They need to be nurtured; their giftedness and learning need to be valued; and they need to be given time, attention, and patience and to be supported to expand their skills.
- A gifted child's learning opportunities are enhanced when parents and teachers work in partnership, sharing information and ideas.
- Learning opportunities for encouraging giftedness include: community programmes and events, extra-curricular activities, clubs, mentors, resources, such as books, games, puzzles, art materials, musical instruments, and technologies, such as the Internet and computer programs.
- Parents can help their gifted children to overcome difficulties by keeping the communication lines open, providing opportunities for their children to make friends, and helping their children develop strategies to deal with problems such as teasing and perfectionism.





#### How to Identify Giftedness

- A variety of methods and measures are used for identifying giftedness.
- Some measures are not culturally or linguistically appropriate or have limited cultural perspectives. However, teachers are becoming more aware of such issues and are introducing measures to ensure that gifted children from different cultural and linguistic groups are identified.
- Parents could talk with other parents of gifted children, professionals who have experience with gifted children, or people with expertise in the area they think their child shows talent in to help confirm the child's giftedness.
- Psychological assessment is not necessary to identify giftedness, but it can be helpful in certain circumstances.



Chapter 2: Partnerships with Education

# The New Zealand Education System and Curriculum

EDUCATION SYSTEM

POTENTIAL

This section gives a brief overview of some systems and documents that will enable you to:

- set the education of gifted children in the context of the overall education system for New Zealand;
- understand what you can reasonably expect from our education system for your child.

The Ministry of Education is the central controlling body for education in New Zealand. It is responsible for providing policy advice to the Minister of Education and oversees the implementation of all government policy decisions about education.

## Early Childhood Education

## Types of Services and Requirements

Licensed and chartered early childhood services meet standards set by government. There is a range of services, full day and part-time, some led by trained teachers and others by parents, whānau, or caregivers. Teacher-led services include licensed early childhood services with management committees, for example, private, community, workplace, Montessori, and Steiner centres, as well as kindergartens, The Correspondence School, and home-based networks. Parent-led services include playcentres, kōhanga reo, and playgroups such as ngā puna kōhungahunga and 'āoga 'āmata. Governance and management structures vary in these different services.

Regulatory requirements establish national criteria for providing quality early childhood education and care.

#### Curriculum

Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa/ Early Childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996) is the New Zealand curriculum document for the early childhood sector. It is a non-prescriptive, bicultural, common curriculum for the diverse services that provide early childhood education. The curriculum, relating to children from birth to school-entry age, integrates education and care and includes suggestions for planned experiences and learning opportunities as well as for interactions that arise spontaneously. *Te Whāriki* is based on four principles: Empowerment (Whakamana), Holistic Development (Kotahitanga), Family and Community (Whānau Tangata), and Relationships (Ngā Hononga), which provide a framework for learning.

*Te Whāriki* statements and goals advocate, for a diverse range of children, "equitable opportunities for learning" that "recognise, acknowledge, and build on each child's special strengths" (page 64). The curriculum must "be flexible enough to encompass ... the need for challenge as a medium for growth" (page 21).

There are no specific references to gifted children in the document, but statements such as those quoted above recognise individual learning pathways. The document could also be considered to refer to gifted children in references to children with special needs.



## School Sector

#### Governance, Management, and Requirements

Each state and integrated school is governed by a board of trustees made up of elected parent and community volunteers, the school principal, and a staff representative. Secondary schools may also include a student representative on their board. Committees, trustee boards, and management boards acting on behalf of the owners govern independent (private) schools.

The principal manages the school's day-to-day activities within the general policy directions of the board and provides professional and educational leadership. A principal is also usually responsible for assessing staff performance.

In consultation with its local community, each board must develop a school charter, which is the board's undertaking that their school will be governed and managed in line with legislation. The charter establishes the mission, aims, objectives, directions, and targets of the board, which incorporate the government's National Education Guidelines and the board's priorities. Thus a school's charter contains local goals and reflects national ones.

The government's National Education Guidelines contain a statement of National Education Goals (NEGs) in New Zealand as well as curriculum statements and National Administration Guidelines (NAGs). NAG 1 states that each board, through the principal and staff, is required to foster student achievement by providing teaching and learning programmes and assessment practices that incorporate the New Zealand Curriculum. NEG 1 refers to "the highest standards of achievement through programmes which enable all students to realise their full potential".

Each board, in conjunction with the principal and teaching staff, is also required to develop a long-term strategic plan and an annual plan relating to intended student outcomes, the school's performance, and its use of resources. They are required to present an annual report to their community and the Ministry of Education.



Each school develops a range of policy and/or procedural statements with the aim of meeting the needs of all its students. Such policies may include a policy in regard to gifted and talented learners, or reference to gifted and talented learners may be included in more general policy statements on curriculum and assessment.

#### Curriculum

The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) provides an overall framework for what is taught and assessed in schools. The principles set out in the curriculum place the individual student at the centre of all teaching and learning. They assert that students' talents should be recognised and affirmed and that all students should experience a curriculum that engages and challenges them to achieve personal excellence.



You can find more information on the way schools and centres are administered and regulated on www.ece.govt.nz and www.minedu.govt.nz

A downloadable guide, "Schooling in New Zealand", is available. Curriculum information is available on: www.tki.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/

#### **Education Review Office**

The Education Review Office (ERO) is a government department that reviews and provides public reports on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services. ERO also reports to the Secretary for Education on the education of students exempted from attending a school. The law requires that students educated at home be taught as regularly and as well as in a registered school.

#### Education Reviews in Relation to Gifted Children

Using a Board Assurance Statement, schools are asked, in relation to the NAGs, whether the board of trustees, through the principal and staff and on the basis of good-quality assessment information, has:

- identified students and groups of students who have special needs (including gifted and talented students);
- developed and implemented teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students (identified above).

Adapted from Education Review Office, 2006, pages 5–6

As well as being considered as a general compliance issue, what schools are doing for gifted students could be looked at in a review as a School Specific Priority or as an Area of National Interest.

You can view all ERO reports on schools and early childhood services and find more information about the process of ERO reviews online at: www.ero.govt.nz

## **Initiatives Regarding Gifted Students**



## **Policy and Principles**

Following a ministerial working party assessment of gifted education, *Initiatives for Gifted and Talented Learners* was published in 2002. This Ministry of Education document sets out policy direction in regard to gifted learners. In its foreword, the Minister of Education describes it as illustrating "the Government's commitment to supporting the achievement of gifted and talented learners" (page 1).

The document sets out some core principles that the working party felt should be at the heart of educating gifted students. One of particular interest to parents is:

Schools and early childhood centres should provide opportunities for parents, caregivers, and whānau to be involved in the decision making that affects the learning of individual students.

Ministry of Education, 2002, page 3

While the principles also apply to early childhood, most of the initiatives are aimed at the school sector. As explained earlier, the early childhood and school sectors are separately funded and regulated. However, policy issues specific to early childhood education are recognised as a future area of focus in *Initiatives for Gifted and Talented Learners*.

To read the initiative statement published in 2002, go to: www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/initiatives\_e.php

## Support for Schools

#### Advisers

In-depth professional development is provided to schools (if requested by the school) through School Support Services advisers attached to colleges or schools of education. These advisers also establish links with teacher educators who educate teachers at the preservice and postgraduate levels.



## Handbook

*Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools* was sent to all schools in 2000. This is a handbook to assist schools to plan and provide for their gifted students and put school-wide processes in place. It was not intended as a prescription but as a useful guide.

To read this handbook, go to: www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/handbook/index\_e.php

### TKI

A gifted and talented community was established on the Ministry of Education's Online Learning Centre, Te Kete Ipurangi, at: www.tki.org.nz/e/community/gifted

The information on this site supplements what is available in *Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools* and continues to be updated regularly.

### **Other Support Services**

Listed below are some of the many other services whose personnel occasionally work with gifted children.

Resource teachers of learning and behaviour (RTLBs) can work with primary-school-aged children and year 9 and 10 students. The RTLBs are co-ordinated by schools and will consult with parents as required.

Students can meet with school counsellors in secondary schools.

Early intervention services are provided by Group Special Education (part of the Ministry of Education) at the early childhood level. These services can sometimes include support for gifted children. Group Special Education also offer support for schools for those with learning or behavioural difficulties.

Support workers, such as teachers' aides, behaviour support workers, kaiāwhina, or education support workers, may work with children with special needs in schools or in early childhood services. They are mostly funded through Group Special Education but can also be funded through a school's Special Education Grant (SEG). For more information about services provided through Group Special Education, see www.minedu.govt.nz and go to the Special Education heading.



## Innovation

#### **Funding Pools**

There is a contestable pool of money that schools, clusters of schools, kura kaupapa, private providers, universities, and community groups can apply for to set up Talent Development Initiatives projects. This funding provides additional support for innovative programmes and professional development in gifted education to improve outcomes for gifted students. To find out more about some of the initiatives that have been developed, go to: www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/tdi/funding\_pool/stories/index\_e.php

Schools focusing on initiatives that include meeting the needs of gifted students can also sometimes obtain funding from other funding pools, such as the ICT professional development pool and Extending High Standards Across Schools (EHSAS).

#### Research

In 2003, the Ministry of Education commissioned research into effective approaches to meeting the needs of gifted and talented learners. As a result, a comprehensive publication was developed that included a literature review that collated New Zealand and overseas research, an outline of current identification and programming practices in New Zealand schools, and case studies of ten schools. The research showed many positive things happening. Some of the "gaps" in practice, including involving parents and whānau in identifying and planning for gifted students in schools, are being considered in future directions and initiatives. You can read the report on: www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/gifted

#### Advisory Group: Gifted and Talented Learners

This committee represents a range of educational backgrounds and parenting interests (with flexibility to co-opt members). It oversees progress on implementing Ministry of Education initiatives, advises the Ministry of Education on implications for future directions, and liaises with other educational groups (such as early childhood and special education) to help set the education of gifted students in an overall educational context.

#### **Requirements - Schools**

#### **NAG Requirement**

A footnote added to NAG 1(iii)c, which took effect from 2005, made it explicit that gifted and talented learners have to be identified and their needs provided for. This has not actually changed requirements but has made explicit what was implicit.

We must remember that there is a range of ways to meet the needs of gifted students. Good learning and teaching begin in the context of the regular classroom. The NAG requirement does not imply the necessity to have separate programmes for these students.

#### Support for Parents

## TKI

Within the gifted community on TKI, there is a section for parents and whānau. This provides information, links, frequently asked questions, and contact details of a range of providers, including local Ministry of Education contacts.

> Log on to www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/ talented/parents to see if there is information of interest to you.



## What Can You Expect from Schools and Early Childhood Services for Your Gifted Child?

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You can expect early childhood services and schools to build children's strengths and interests as expressed in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), the NEGs, and *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). You can expect schools to honour the NAG requirement (see page 91). You can expect that the core principles for educating gifted children, outlined in *Initiatives for Gifted and Talented Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2002), will underpin the education of your child.

In summary, this means that:

- educational provision will be responsive to your child's learning needs (including social and emotional needs) on an ongoing basis;
- you are invited to have input into the educational decisions that are made about your child (including making culturally appropriate decisions).

## What Should You Look for in an Early Childhood Service?

There is a range of early childhood services, but the availability and diversity depend on where you live. The general philosophies of these services, as well as their specific philosophies in regard to gifted children, may vary greatly.

In general, early childhood education supports children as learners through its:

- child-centred philosophy;
- involvement of parents (reflected in the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*);
- focus on holistic development of children;
- use of observation of individuals;
- non-prescriptive curriculum.

Providing well for gifted children does not happen automatically just because the philosophy and curriculum allow it to happen. However, the above characteristics of early childhood education do allow for gifted children to receive appropriate education in an inclusive setting.



#### Before Enrolling Your Child in an Early Childhood Service

# think about

"What would make a good early childhood learning environment for my child?" The answer to this may be as much to do with how the early childhood service responds to diversity and individuality in general as to

what its policies are in regard to giftedness.

"What do I actually want for my child?" Think specifically about what your child's abilities are and what learning needs you would wish to have met as priorities.

A question from the child's viewpoint, linking to one of the strands of *Te Whāriki*, is, "How do you engage my mind, offer challenges, and extend my world?" (Ministry of Education, 2006a, page 68). Perhaps you should consider whether this will be possible for your child in this environment.

When visiting the early childhood service, ask questions about how your child's abilities will be fostered and interests provided for. Look at the children already there – are they happy, involved, engaged? Are you welcome as a visitor? Are parents involved? Is the environment pleasant? Are there wet areas, messy areas, quiet areas, exploration areas? Are teachers guiding and listening to the children? How are different cultures reflected? Are teachers encouraging high-level thinking?

to find out more Saunders, J. and Espeland, P. (1991). *Bringing* out the Best: A Resource Guide for Parents of Young Gifted Children. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.



## What Should You Look for in a School?

General advice and tips for choosing a school, including information about zoning and enrolment schemes, are available online at www.ero.govt.nz and www.teamup.co.nz

#### When You Visit

#### Some Questions to Ask

- What is the school's overall philosophy? What are its priorities? (You might like to read the school's charter to gain a better idea of the philosophy and priorities of the school.)
- What opportunities are there for parent involvement in the school?
- What is the school's philosophy regarding, and approach to meeting, the needs of gifted students?
- Is there a teacher or committee overseeing the education of gifted students?
- How are decisions made about which class each child is allocated to?
- My child has X and Y abilities how could these abilities be catered for?

Remember to consider more than the enrichment programmes being offered – also look at what is happening for the rest of the week in classrooms.

You can ask to be shown around and make a time to visit classrooms. Get a "feel" for the school. Take note of the physical environments and displays, the involvement of the children, the variety of learning activities, the interactions between teachers and children, what behaviours teachers are modelling, for example, curiosity, enthusiasm, encouragement of thinking and independence, and valuing of cultural diversity.



Cathcart, R. (1996). "Choosing a School: How Do I Know if This School Will Be Good for My Child?" *Tall Poppies: Magazine of the* 

New Zealand Association for Gifted Children, vol. 21 no. 1, pp. 5–13.

Dealing with Schools www.nswagtc.org.au/info/schools/ DealingWithSchool.html

Frequently Asked Questions (answered by Dr Tracy Riley in relation to schooling as well as other issues) www.tki.org. nz/r/gifted/interact/faq-riley/riley-faq-index\_e.php

Matthews, D. and Foster, J. (2005). *Being Smart about Gifted Children: A Guidebook for Parents and Educators.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press, chapter 9.

Trussell-Cullen, A. (1994). Whatever Happened to Times Tables? Every Parent's Guide to New Zealand Education. Auckland: Reed Publishing. (This publication provides several checklists of what to consider when making choices about early childhood, primary and secondary school, and home-schooling education. This relates to education in general, but many of the points provide excellent background thinking about what might be important to you.) How Might Learning Be Differentiated for Gifted Children?

Kaleb wakes at night because his brain is thinking too much. He wants to discuss "Is there a life after the afterlife?" or how, for the sake of Planet Earth, the human species needs to become extinct, but hopefully not in his lifetime.

Differentiation involves providing learning experiences to suit the needs of each individual student within an environment that accepts diversity. Differentiation does not just apply to developing cognitive abilities but also to the development of qualities, culturally valued abilities, skills, learning dispositions, self-esteem, perseverance, creativity, and risk taking.

In practice, differentiation affects:

- content (what is taught and learnt ideas, concepts, skills, information);
- processes (the way in which content is presented and learned);
- products of learning (what is produced to demonstrate learning);
- environment (the physical structure of a setting, its organisation, and its social and emotional climate).



This differentiation can occur in the centre or classroom, in the wider school environment, or in the community.

Teaching gifted students using this approach might involve both enrichment (depth and breadth) and acceleration (a faster pace of presenting the material, or covering content in less time than normal, or introducing advanced concepts earlier).

## Differentiation in Early Childhood Education

*Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) advises educators to give children "opportunity to create and act on their own ideas, to develop knowledge and skills in areas that interest them" (page 40).

At the early childhood education level, a child's learning may be differentiated in the following ways:

**Content:** Following a child's interests and passions; having advanced reading materials available for the child to browse through or for teachers to read to them and books that foster self-understanding; advanced equipment, for example, globe, atlas, microscopes; studying real issues and coming up with solutions; and exploring big ideas, for example, extinction.

Maurice became passionate about dinosaurs at about four years of age. He quickly remembered all their different names, their features, the periods they lived in, and the families they belonged to and started creating his own theories about how they became extinct. This led to an interest in fossils and the yearning to be a palaeontologist. Maurice has said he just wants to go to university now to be a palaeontologist (age five).

**Processes:** Delving into a topic, which may mean carrying on with it for longer than most other children; divergent thinking; setting own goals and self-assessment; using equipment in experimental ways; conducting science experiments; leadership opportunities, for example, leading songs, initiating drama at mat time, devising a game and teaching it; engaging in puppet shows with the teacher to explore emotional issues; curiosity starters rather than directives; children setting up own interest centres; time to talk with adults; teachers responding to children's ideas by asking open-ended, higher-order questions to keep them thinking, for example, What would happen if ...? Why do you think that? What do you think will happen? How can we balance it?

**Products:** Tape recording; graphs; books; music; photos; writing on computer; dictated stories; choosing what goes in their portfolio; photos of process and products and transcription of what they say in their portfolio; providing a service, for example, planning and serving afternoon tea to elderly people; creating "how to" books for others (photos, own drawings); sketchbook; item for centre newsletter. **Environment:** Community, for example, marae, museum, mentors; physical, for example, high mobility and a choice of areas for working; emotional, for example, the early childhood service accepting the child's intensities and helping the child accept their differences from others.

### Some Ways of Facilitating Learning

Because early childhood education allows children to move around and choose from a range of activities, differentiation can occur in the following ways.

- Teachers can respond to the ideas of individuals or small groups and build activities from these new ideas.
- Teachers can encourage the development of small groups that are responsive to the interests of children.
- Acceleration can mean both having learning opportunities matched to abilities and needs and being with children of similar intellectual and social abilities, who may be older. There can be mixed-age groups in services, or gifted toddlers may be allowed to join in with the older children. Young children need the chance to develop friendships with and play more complex games with intellectual peers, otherwise they may not understand their own abilities and blame themselves for not fitting in with their age mates (Porter, 2005).

## Differentiation of Learning in Schools

Robert's behaviour and life would be completely acceptable and happy if he only had to deal with adults or older children or like-minded age peers (unrealistic, I know). He would happily spend time with people who he thinks have the same brain as him, or the same interest, or whom he feels know him and understand him and accept him. He has told me he feels like he is about nineteen years old and there are no classes at his school that are right for his brain (age five). Differentiation in schools may include some of the following adaptations:

**Content:** Complexity (beyond the basics), big ideas, connections between ideas, history behind ideas, real issues, cross-disciplinary studies, advanced subject matter, areas of interest and passion, development of self-understanding (including of own abilities), resilience, assertiveness, interpersonal skills.

**Processes:** Open-endedness with multiple potential answers, discovery, choice, faster pace, and less practice for the basics; in-depth study of more challenging material; time to delve; independent study; competitions; discussion; methods of working like a professional in a branch of knowledge; creative, critical, and caring thinking; outlets for expressing feelings, for example, through painting, drama, music, role play of social situations.

**Products:** Choice of style of presentation; creative/original products or performances; synthesis of information in a new form rather than reproducing ideas (going beyond the written project); communication to an audience; participating in a competition, for example, Manu Kōrero speech or Stage Challenge; solutions to real issues or problems; being of service to others. Products also include the intangible outcomes, such as attitudes, values, selfesteem, and self-understanding.

**Environment:** Allows for mobility, creativity, risk taking, challenge, use of the community, use of virtual instruction, with the teacher as facilitator not controller or disperser of knowledge.



## Ways in Which Differentiation May Be Facilitated

## Enrichment for All

Many learning activities for all children are beneficial for gifted children, for example, higher-level thinking skills or programmes, inquiry learning, science fairs, technology challenges, electives, clubs. Sometimes there can be differentiation within these, for example, a gifted child may undertake a more in-depth investigation within a science fair project. However, enrichment for all is not usually sufficient on its own to provide for the needs of gifted children.

## Groupings

These include streaming, clustering a group of gifted children together in a class for the year, cross-age grouping at times, grouping with like-ability age peers in subjects, and working alone at times. Cross-age grouping is one way to achieve provision in a small rural school or in a whānau class, where a young child can work with the older ones. There are also plenty of leadership opportunities in these settings for older students.

## **Buddies and Mentors**

A buddy could be an older student or email buddy (especially in small schools or in isolated areas). A mentor may provide a cultural or gender role model to work with your child in a shared area of interest and may be a community or workforce member, parent, retired person, or any teacher.

## Dual Enrolment or Concurrent Enrolment

A student may be enrolled for something specific at another level of education, for example, a secondary student doing a tertiary course. Gifted secondary students may be considered for dual enrolment with The Correspondence School to study an extra subject. Primary students can also be considered for dual enrolment with The Correspondence School, at the request of the school principal, for enrichment or advanced-level study in a subject or to take an extra subject. See www.minedu.govt.nz under Schools: Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (incl NCEA): National Curriculum: Enrolment with The Correspondence School for more information.

#### **Enrichment or Extension Programmes**

In these programmes, children leave their regular classroom and come together (often cross-age) to work with a teacher or an outside expert. This may be once a week or for a block of days. Sometimes these programmes are interschool. They may be subject based, for example, oral language, dramatic performance, te reo, art, or cross-curricular, for example, investigations, leadership, community projects. They may incorporate special programmes, for example, Future Problem Solving, Philosophy for Children, CREST (Creativity in Science and Technology), and Science Badges.

Some approaches being used successfully for gifted Māori students are: whānau groupings, extension through wānanga enrolment, use of tohunga as mentors, the provision of extra responsibilities, high teacher expectation, the inclusion of Māorirelevant content and contexts for learning, and whānau and community consultation, involvement, and empowerment (Bevan-Brown, 2004).



#### **One-Day-a-Week Programmes**

In some regions, children from a variety of schools come together one day each week to take part in programmes run by private providers. You can find information about these at www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/talented/parents/links\_e.php

In other areas, clusters of schools or big schools provide one-day programmes for gifted children.

#### Acceleration

Acceleration can occur by moving quickly through curriculum content in the classroom. Sometimes a student is moved a class or more ahead of their age peers. In New Zealand schools, this is most likely to occur in the junior primary school or at secondary level, where it is sometimes in specific subject areas. It is rare for children to enter school before the age of five due to the 1989 Education Act, which states that no person under five years of age shall be enrolled at a primary school.

Some reasons for acceleration to an older year group might be:

- to provide an appropriate level of challenge;
- to avoid underachievement that can result when a child is coasting without having to put in any real effort;
- to allow for interaction with older children, which may be beneficial socially as well as cognitively.

Some educators believe that acceleration to an older year group is inappropriate because often the accelerated child does not seem to do well socially with older children. However, there is a similar possibility that the child has nothing in common with their age peers, so moving into a class with older children may actually allow them to find friends. Also, as Eddie Braggett points out:

We must be very careful to keep the intellectual and social aspects in perspective. While it may be true that some children benefit from remaining with their age-peers for social activities, there is no justification for retarding a child's cognitive growth for social reasons.

Braggett, 1993, page 122

Acceleration of this sort will suit some individuals and not others. Principals, teachers, parents, and children should all be involved in acceleration decisions.

Before acceleration occurs, a number of things should be considered:

- Will the new teacher differentiate learning for the child?
- Is the child willing to take the emotional leap of being with a new group of children?
- How will they be supported (for example, by a buddy, a teacher, a counsellor) into the new environment?
- Is a trial period (for example, six weeks) appropriate?
- Prior to acceleration, have there been opportunities to interact with older students?
- Is the child's ability at the top end of the new class?





## think about

If you are thinking about acceleration for your child, consider the pros and cons and also weigh up the other possibilities. More

information on guidelines for acceleration are available online at: www.austega.com/gifted/accelerationguidelines.htm

#### **Differentiation in Early Childhood**



Allan, B. (2002). "Identifying and Providing for Giftedness in the Early Years". *The Early Years Research and Practice Series*, no. 1, 2002.

Harrison, C. (2003). *Giftedness in Early Childhood*, 3rd ed. Sydney: GERRIC, University of New South Wales.

Mares, L. (1991). *Young Gifted Children.* Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Ministry of Education (2004 and 2007). *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars.* Wellington: Learning Media. (These show examples of the way in which children's ideas and interests can be built upon.)

Porter, L. (2004). "Giftedness in Early Childhood". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press.

#### **Differentiation in School**

Gross, M., Macleod, B., Drummond, D. and Merrick, C. (2001). Gifted Students in Primary Schools. Differentiating the Curriculum. Sydney: GERRIC, University of New South Wales. (gerric@unsw. edu.au)

Gross, M., Macleod, B. and Pretorius, M. (2001). *Gifted Students in Secondary Schools. Differentiating the Curriculum*, 2nd ed. Sydney: GERRIC, University of New South Wales.

Macleod, R. (2004). "Educational Provision: Secondary Schools". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press.

Ministry of Education (2000). *Gifted and Talented Students. Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools.* Wellington: Learning Media.

Riley, T. (2000). *Planning for Differentiation*. www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/pedagogy/plan\_differen\_e.php

Riley, T. (2004). "Qualitative Differentiation for Gifted and Talented Students". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press.

Taylor, S. (2001). *Gifted and Talented Children. A Planning Guide.* Christchurch: User Friendly.

Wilson, P. (2005). *Visual Artists Are Gifted/Talented Too!* www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/special\_topics/arts\_e.php

#### Home Schooling

Some parents seek an alternative way to differentiate learning for their children through home schooling. Although it requires an enormous time commitment, some see it as a way of allowing flexibility to provide enriching learning opportunities without time constraints. Passion areas can be studied in depth. Community resources can be tapped. Mentors or tutors may be found for some subject areas. Students may gain access to secondary- and tertiary-level courses part-time at an earlier age. In some areas, home schoolers get together to either learn or socialise.





Hendy-Harris, J. (2004). "Home Schooling". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives,* ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen.

Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press. (This article provides details of the experiences of a family who home schooled two gifted children.)

James, A. (2004). *Home Education in New Zealand*. New Plymouth: Zenith Publishing. (This includes information on how to get an exemption and write an application as well as offering curriculum information and details about various suitable websites.)

Rivero, L. (2002). *Creative Home Schooling. A Resource Guide for Smart Families.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

ERO Reviews of Homeschooled Students. Report March 2001. www.ero.govt.nz/ero/publishing.nsf Go to Reports/National Reports

New Zealand Home Education. This voluntary site contains information and advice, regional groups, contacts, and email and chat lists. www.home.school.nz
## **Differentiation to Address** Underachievement

#### What Is Underachievement?

Could de better. New completes set tasks. Underachievement (or not using all of one's potential) is a learned behaviour, not a condition. Labelling the behaviour is more useful than labelling your child as an underachiever because they are bound to have achieved in some areas, even if these areas were out of school. Underachieving behaviours affect only some parts of your child's life and may be due to school factors, peer influences, home factors, and personality factors.



Term 2 Report

For:

В

Grade Comments

Could try harder.

Ask yourself "Do I achieve highly in everything? Should I do so? Do I want to? Could I? Do I actually choose to be mediocre in some things because they're

not that important to me? Is this the same for my child?"



As parents, put your child's achievement in perspective: their achievements and passions out of school may be outstanding, and these may even be where a career begins, for example, as an artist, an astronomer, a cultural leader. Value your child's achievements.

If your child chooses not to perform at a level that they could, they may be a "selective consumer" of education or a non-producer "adept at taking the best from what school and teachers have to offer and leaving the rest behind" (Delisle and Galbraith, 2002, page 174). They are motivated in some areas of their choice and will perform when they want to or in the right environment.

However, if they do not have the skills, strategies, or selfknowledge to achieve, have a poor academic self-image, or are highly perfectionist then, given their potential, they are underachieving, but not by choice. They may have cruised early on and then reached a point where more is expected, and they need to be organised. Your child may have learned so swiftly and easily that they do not recognise the strategies they are using and may not have developed perseverance. If they suddenly need to put in effort, they may decide they don't have the ability needed and so avoid activities in which they might not excel instantly.

#### What to Do about It

Don't expect your child to achieve all the time. They need times to slow down, relax, have fun.

Underachievement is most likely to be reversed if children are allowed to pursue an out-of-school interest that brings success and increases self-esteem and, for this reason, it is important to avoid punishing your child by withdrawing them from activities they love if they are not achieving in or out of school.

# think about

Why is your child underachieving? Do they have the necessary skills and confidence to achieve? Are they switched off or under too much pressure? Do they

think very differently and therefore are not achieving in the traditional sense? What engages their interest? What doesn't? Talk with them – do they agree with your perceptions? Do you model a love of learning and acceptance of mistakes at home? Do you encourage effort rather than being right?

Pool information with your child's teachers. Develop a problemsolving process that involves you, your child, and their teachers. Set some goals.

#### As Delisle and Galbraith (2002) say:

Once it is acknowledged that some so called underachievers have nearly total control of their academic lives but merely choose not to perform, while others cannot change their behaviors because of a lack of personal power or inner resources, then the general strategies that are used to address the specific behaviours will become more on-target and focused.

page 180

It should be possible to work with your child's teachers to reverse underachievement. Those children who do not perform because of a lack of interest need plenty of opportunities to pursue topics of interest, with a choice of ways to share their learning and with real audiences. Moving on from work already mastered and ability grouping with like-minded peers may also help to break the pattern of non-engaging.

For those who are underachieving for other reasons, some potential strategies your child's teacher could include are:

- setting goal plans that include identifying barriers and support systems;
- encouraging the child to become a peer tutor to a younger child;

- encouraging the child to develop learning skills and strategies, for example, note taking, visualisation, time management, positive self-talk;
- having the child practise skills with a group before applying them independently;
- having the child use computer programs that provide cues or feedback;
- encouraging the child to participate in enrichment programmes that focus on strength areas.

As a parent, you could be supportive when helping with homework. (Resist the urge to do the work for your child, however. If space allows, set up an area that they want to work in – let them decorate the area and get it organised to assist with good working habits – or make a portable homework kit.)

Ultimately people are the key. Positive role models – parents, teachers, whānau, mentors, career models, peers are needed for "children who don't perform as well academically as we know they could and we think they should" (Delisle and Galbraith, 2002, page 167).



Cohen, L. and Frydenberg, E. (1993). *Coping for Capable Kids: Strategies for Teachers, Parents, Students*. Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Coil, C. (2003). *Student Engagement: Strategies to Raise Achievement.* Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Coil, C. (2005). *Motivating Underachievers: 220 Strategies for Success*, revised and expanded edition. Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Delisle, J. and Galbraith, J. (2002). When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit, chapter 6.

Heacox, D. (1991). *Up from Underachievement: How Teachers, Students, and Parents Can Work Together to Promote Student Success.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Moltzen, R. (2004). "Underachievement". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press.



### Differentiation to Address Learning Difficulties or Differences

... my handwriting is closer to spiders dying than text

West, 1997, page 270

The above quote comes from a computer programmer who produces complex systems in computers because he can see holistically but has terrible handwriting and difficulty with reading and spelling. Gifted children with learning difficulties, physical or sensory disabilities, emotional disturbance, or disorders such as Asperger syndrome or ADHD may be seen to have mixed abilities.

Ira has never slept much, and we have been battling with exhaustion since his birth. At school, he appears to dislike writing, needs to move when he is learning, and lacks recognition of people's personal space. He reads better upside down and thinks in 3D. His strengths are in science and inventions. At age seven, he became very unhappy. The disparity between his thinking ability and his ability to write his thoughts down clearly and quickly caused him huge frustration and a sense of failure. He was given a place in a one-day school. His [primary] school now recognises that he has strengths.

#### Learning Difficulties

A child who is gifted and has learning difficulties has superior intellectual ability but difficulty in mastering basic skills in school learning. Children with learning difficulties may struggle with reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, calculation, thinking sequentially, social skills, memory, concentration, or organisation, but they may be orally articulate, good problem solvers, and creative thinkers. They often do not know what strategies to use or when to use them, nor do they pay attention to significant detail, check, plan, or organise.

They are likely to demonstrate a discrepancy between different learning areas, for example, they could be poor at writing but good at science or poor at number in maths but good in geometry, and also between areas of achievement in and out of school.

Some conditions, such as Asperger syndrome and ADHD, are not classified as learning difficulties but may impact on learning in different areas.



Is my child a walking paradox – do they thrive on complexity but struggle with easy work?

A child may have difficulty remembering and using isolated facts and associations, for example, rules of basic facts and other maths, spelling, punctuation, names of ballet steps, or musical notation, but have no problem understanding and discovering patterns and connections in large amounts of visual and verbal information (Baum et al., 1991). Therefore, they thrive on complexity but struggle with basic work.

In reading, the problem could be in comprehension or in fluency or in linking letters to sounds. Children with learning difficulties may struggle to work out words and often have difficulty with spelling and writing. However, the gifted child's comprehension is often better than that of others with reading difficulties and is more in line with their general thinking ability. The difficulty may not be apparent at first because the child may use their visual memory of words. It

is only when the child reads more extended texts that their visual memory gets overwhelmed and the problem becomes apparent.

Gifted students with learning difficulties may be viewed as underachieving if their abilities are recognised but not their difficulties. Or they may be seen as average, doing OK, because they use compensating strategies to hide their difficulties, but the energy required to complete the task doesn't allow them to fully display their giftedness. In these cases, neither their ability nor disability is recognised. Alternatively they may be viewed as having a learning difficulty without having their giftedness recognised.

It is important that thorough auditory and visual processing assessments be carried out if your child seems to have learning difficulties. These assessments may be over and above the regular ear and eye tests conducted in schools. Visual or auditory processing problems can sometimes be the cause of learning difficulties. IQ or other cognitive tests are helpful in pinpointing areas of difficulty as well as strength (see Psychological Assessment, page 26).

We need to place learning difficulties in perspective – they may be seen as issues in the school context but are not necessarily a barrier in later life. Children with learning difficulties may be the late bloomers:

Almost all of us have learning difficulties in some aspect of our lives. Some people who are exceptionally skilled with language and even become English teachers have difficulty balancing their checkbooks. Others who are nuclear physicists never do learn to spell correctly.

Lokerson, 1992, page 1

"Learning difficulties" could even be strengths! Some people may have achieved success or greatness not in spite of but because of their apparent disabilities.

[T]he complex of traits referred to as "learning difficulties" or dyslexia may be in part the outward manifestation of the relative strength of a different mode of thought ... Too often, the gift is not recognized and is regarded only as a problem.

West, 1997, page 19

Creative visual thinkers with some learning difficulties may be better adapted than others to changes. They may have difficulty memorising formulae but, as computer visualisation techniques are increasingly used to analyse complex systems, for example, largescale atmospheric systems, they may find themselves better adapted to seeing new patterns. In the future, traditional education skills may become less valued as machines are developed that can do them faster and better, for example, recall of factual information, accurate calculation, correct spelling, rapid reading. Those attuned to fully understanding complex problems may be better at creating new knowledge than absorbing and retaining old knowledge (West, 1997).

West points out that Einstein had a poor memory for facts, words, and botanical names but was interested in large concepts, underlying patterns, and truths. Thus, West suggests:

we might wish to consider not so much whether an individual's memory is good or bad, but what kinds of things his or her mind is good at remembering – the big patterns or the comparatively unimportant details.

page 124

think about

Is a learning difficulty really a learning difficulty, or is it a creative asset?

Some highly visual-spatial learners who think in images rather than in words (Silverman, 2002) have no learning difficulties, but if formal learning is presented in a linear, sequential way, the child may seem unable to achieve. They may find step-by-step rote learning, timed tests, practice, phonics, printing, spelling, and organising difficult but will thrive on abstract concepts, multidisciplinary studies, verbal reasoning, big-picture learning, and unusual ways of problem solving.

Francis Galton, a famous nineteenth-century scientist and mathematician, thought in pictures or images. He is reported to have said that his results were clear and satisfactory to him but that, to explain them, he had to translate thoughts into words and phrases. This slowed his writing and made his speech awkward. He had to prepare himself to speak (West, 1997).

#### Strategies for Those with Learning Difficulties

Overall, as with all gifted children, gifted children with learning difficulties need challenges that capitalise and build on their strengths and interests, but they also need more support and structure to overcome difficulties.

Your child's teacher may be using some of the following strategies:

- explicit teaching and modelling of thinking, for example, thinking aloud, visualising, and self-questioning: "Does this look right?" "Am I focusing?";
- allowing compensatory strategies to be used, for example, computer spellchecks, calculators, dictation tape recorders, reader/writer assistance, and other computer aids;
- encouraging reasonable expectations, for example, doing less, allocating more time, and doing only what is important, prioritising things they are unable to do and deciding how much such things matter;
- encouraging the child to develop coping strategies, for example, finding out how others have coped (role models), to work with a mentor, to learn resilience (spring back), to learn relaxation techniques, and to develop outlets, for example, music, painting;
- teaching multisensory approaches for reading and spelling, for example, looking for patterns, writing, visualising, tracing, making pictures of words and phrases; playing games; working with CD-ROMs; and practising lots (but not using rote learning).



#### Strategies for Visual-Spatial Learners

Students can:

- visualise how the end product should look;
- visualise to remember (for example, a spelling word);

7711

- use drawing, diagrams, mind maps, colour;
- look for patterns rather than carry out step-by-step procedures;
- observe what needs to be done before doing it.

More ....



#### **Learning Difficulties**

Baum, S., Owen, S. and Dixon, J. (1993). *To Be Gifted and Learning Disabled: From* 

*Identification to Practical Intervention Strategies.* Highett, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Montgomery, D. (2003). *Gifted and Talented Children with Special Educational Needs*. London: David Fulton, chapters 1–4.

Sturgess, A. (2004). "Celebrating the Square Peg: Gifted with Specific Learning Difficulties". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press.

#### **Visual-Spatial Learners**

Silverman, L. (2002). *Upside-down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner*. Denver, CO: Deleon Publishing.

Conditions like ADHD and Asperger syndrome, sensory and physical disabilities, and social, emotional, and behavioural disorders have only been mentioned briefly in this book. Indepth coverage is outside the scope of this publication, but some suggested reading is:

Lovecky, D. (2004). *Different Minds: Gifted Children with ADHD, Asperger Syndrome, and Other Learning Deficits.* New York: Jessica Kingsley.

Montgomery, D. (2003). *Gifted and Talented Children with Special Educational Needs.* London: David Fulton, chapters 5–9.

Webb, J., Amend, E., Webb, N., Goerss, J., Beljan, P., and Olenchak, F. (2005). *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnosis of Gifted Children and Adults: ADHD, Bipolar, OCD, Asperger's, Depression and Other Disorders*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Willard-Holt, C. (1999). "Dual Exceptionalities". ERIC EC Digest #E574. Accessed 19 June 2006 from: http://ericec.org/digests/e574.htm

## Fostering Partnerships

A Ministry of Education study (Biddulph et al., 2003) concludes that children's achievement can be significantly enhanced if the partnerships between home and early childhood service or school are genuinely collaborative and there is a climate of equality that recognises each other's specialist knowledge and understanding.

Children react differently in different contexts, and parents and teachers will bring different perspectives to understanding a child's development. Parents and teachers need to be aware of and respect the knowledge and expertise that each bring to nurturing a gifted child's talents.

Realistically, we have to remember that teachers work with many children of varying needs. We also know that giftedness can become hidden in a classroom or elsewhere and that some children deliberately hide their ability. You've known your child since birth – teachers haven't. Therefore, it is essential to foster good *partnerships* with educators.

A good partnership involves listening to each other and offering a free flow of information. As a parent, you can get involved in the wider school picture of what happens for gifted children. Setting policy direction is a partnership between elected boards of trustees, principals, staff, parents, and communities.

#### Some Advice on Approaching Schools and Early Childhood Services

Show understanding for the demands that your child's teachers face. Offer any help you can, for example, with class trips, resources, or providing cultural expertise. Arrange a time to discuss issues in depth, for example, "Could we meet soon and have a conversation about Marco's progress?" rather than introducing your important questions when the teacher is really busy.

Remember that your child's teacher has a lot of things to deal with at any one time – there is more than just your child in their class – so be specific when discussing your child's needs.

Don't generalise with statements like "She is *always* bored", "You *never* provide him with interesting work", "You *never* do any science" but offer tangible positive suggestions: "Kylie understands everything the class is learning about fractions and needs to be challenged more. Is there any way we can expand the lessons to extend her a bit more?"

If you find it hard to deal with a high-energy child at home, remember it's just as hard for teachers to deal with one in the classroom.

#### Where to Start

Always start by talking with the class teacher in a primary school, the subject teacher or the form teacher in a secondary school, or the head teacher or supervisor in an early childhood service (because there is not usually one teacher allocated to a child).

If you are not happy with the outcomes of talking with the teacher, arrange a meeting with the syndicate leader, co-ordinator for gifted students (if there is one), assistant principal, deputy principal, or principal in a primary or intermediate school; or the dean, deputy principal (DP), or co-ordinator for gifted students (or learning support) in secondary schools. Take your notes from previous conferences so you can objectively outline previous communications between yourself and your child's teacher.

#### The Parent-Teacher Conference: How to Make It Successful

Make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher to discuss any issues in depth. When preparing for this conference, you might like to ask yourself the following questions:

- What is your child's perception of the school or early childhood service?
- What are your goals for your child, and what are your child's goals?
- What potential strategies do you suggest could be worked on in the school or early childhood service and at home?

If relevant to your goals, take along specific examples of what your child does out of the school or early childhood service – what they say, make, write, paint, the types of questions they ask, and their out-of-school interests. If you wish to share an independent assessment report, you may consider giving it to the teacher to read before the conference.

#### At the Conference

You can take a support person if you wish. If there are going to be several people, let the teacher know in advance.

- Show that you have come to exchange information and insights.
- Ensure that a purpose and goal are set for the meeting you may not be able to tackle everything in one meeting.
- Share with the teacher what your child has said they enjoy about the school or service.
- Ask what you can do to help.
- Keep some notes this helps to ensure there is common understanding and follow-through.



- Have a plan or agreement made before you leave.
- If either you or the teacher want time to think, agree to a future date for a meeting.
- Reiterate the decisions you have made (to clarify what you have agreed on).

#### Evaluating the Conference

- Was your child the main focus?
- Did you and the teacher listen to each other?
- Did you come to some understanding?
- Did you decide on some strategies?
- Are there some commitments?
- What is the next step?

See also www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/interact/faq\_riley/faq3\_e.php

This website addresses the question "How do I handle my school's poor response to my child's giftedness?"

#### Individual Education Plans

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is both a process and an ensuing plan. It can also be called an Individual Plan (IP), Individual Development Plan (IDP), or Talent Development Plan (TDP).

The process involves a team approach with teachers, parents, whānau, child (depending on age), and sometimes people from other agencies meeting, setting goals for the child, developing a plan, and then continuing to monitor progress. The meeting can take place in an environment most comfortable for the participants – it could be at school, at the centre, at home, or on a marae.

The intention of the IEP is not to isolate the child or have them working on their own but to identify goals and teaching approaches that are geared to the child's needs. It is primarily about building on strengths, not just focusing on weaknesses, even if the child is underachieving. Goals may be about intellectual, social, and emotional development and what is culturally valued.



If there is to be an IEP for your child, information will be collected at the centre or school and from you in regard to:

- your child's strengths, interests, difficulties, and problems;
- when your child is engaged and motivated;
- achievement data, including school results and out-of-school activities.

The following are examples of the kinds of information shared and decisions made at a first IEP meeting.

## Information Brought to the IEP Meeting for Stephen, Year 9 (thirteen-year-old boy)

#### By Parents

- Excels at drama in local theatre group
- Likes drawing
- Skilled on the computer teaches his parents
- Won't do homework unless parents stand over him
- Slow at writing not keen.

#### By School

(Information gathered from all his teachers by form teacher – learning support teacher also at meeting)

- Achieves well in art and technology
- His work reflects attention to design detail
- Work often not handed in
- Poor concentration in many classes
- Average to below average achievement in other subjects.

#### By Stephen

- My strengths acting, drawing, computer, science
- Find spelling, handwriting, grammar difficult slows me down
- Some teachers think I'm not doing my best
- Some classes are boring.

#### Goals (decided together)

#### For Stephen:

- to achieve higher grades in weaker subjects
- to enjoy school more.

#### **Strategies**

#### Home

- Allow Stephen to do homework on the computer when appropriate (learning support teacher to clear this with his teachers).
- Have a set homework time when there are no distractions.

#### School

- Have some regular learning support time to learn strategies to overcome writing difficulties.
- Audition for school production.
- Self-nominate for any year 9–10 enrichment programmes that Stephen is interested in.



#### Information Brought to an IEP Meeting for Sina, Year 1 (six-year-old girl)

#### By Parents

- IQ score: 145 independently assessed
- Has characteristics of all the overexcitabilities (Dabrowski), for example, rapid speech, excitable, very observant, own fantasy world, stomach aches, melodramatic
- Was reading before started school
- Loves dancing, especially Sāmoan style
- "Whirlwind" behaviour hard to keep up with
- Bursting with ideas in the morning hard to get her to school
- Loves drawing examples show use of colour and perspective
- Intense interest in some things; bored with others.

#### By School (Teacher and Associate Principal)

- Reading at an advanced level Journals
- Good at maths level 4 numeracy assessment
- Won't sit still
- Writes very little
- Cries easily
- Refuses to do certain things
- Can physically intimidate other children.

Sina did not attend the meeting. However, she told her mother what she liked and didn't like at school. After discussion, the following strategies were decided on:

#### Goals for Sina

- Have outlets for physical movement.
- Have opportunities for advanced-level maths.
- Have opportunities for dancing and drawing at school.
- Increase her interest in writing at school.
- Increase her emotional happiness.





- Before school at home physical activity, for example, ride bike
- At school in the morning, class brain gym, ten-minute individual time with the teacher aide to talk
- Class role play of scenarios, for example, what to do when feeling frustrated
- Maths with older children each day (in the next-door class)
- Writing/projects of own choice won't sit in on communal class story writing on mat (too basic)
- Opportunities to participate in dance/cultural activities
- Home and school: accept all feelings, even if they seem melodramatic (use reflective listening)
- Home and school: teach self-talk and relaxation for when feeling wrought up
- School: voluntary "time away" card (go to the next-door room to draw)
- Teachers supplied with information that explains, and provides strategies to deal with, overexcitabilities.

## Information Brought to IP Meeting for Aroha (four-year-old girl)

#### By Parents and Grandmother

- Has picked up reading from being read to at home
- Is bilingual
- Is writing a few words
- Loves music and singing remembers tunes and words to song
- Excellent memory
- Can be "bossy".

#### By Kōhanga Reo Kaiako and Kaiāwhina

- Loves singing and playing instruments at mat time
- Loves being with the kaiako and kaiāwhina
- Gets angry with other children who don't want to play her games
- Is often alone.

#### **Goals for Aroha**

- Supervised opportunities to lead and socialise
- Opportunities to use her strengths and build on them.

#### **Strategies**

- Kaiāwhina to join in games with children when Aroha has a good idea for something to play – other children will be more likely to stay
- Grandmother to teach her new songs in Māori
- Aroha to lead a song at mat time occasionally and make up actions. She can choose other children to help her
- Help kaiako write captions around the kohanga reo
- Have simple reading texts in Māori available in the reading corner.

## Forming Positive Partnerships between Parents and Educators

As parents and teachers of gifted children, we shouldn't try tangoing on our own – it takes two to tango! And why? Because at the centre of the partnership between parents and educators is a child and not just any child, but one with exceptional potential – your child, my child, our child. It is up to parents and teachers to create, choreograph, coach, teach, and applaud the educational dance of that gifted child. And that dance, as all dances, should be an expression of celebration!

Dare we deny ourselves the opportunity to tango in a partnership that joyfully celebrates the gifted child?

Riley, 1999

During research for this publication, the following important messages came through from parents. These are valuable points to reflect on when seeking to develop a good parent-teacher partnership.

#### We want a broad understanding of our children.

As we need your advice and support, we value discussion about our children from your viewpoint. What we tell you as parents about our children is also important.

We want a good relationship and information flow between students, parents, and teachers.

Parents need the teachers' help and advice in providing the best options for their children.

I think my child is gifted and would like to talk to his teacher about giving him more challenging work, but I am afraid they will think I am whakahīhī (skiting).

We want to work together because we want to share information about work habits, results, and what motivates our children.

#### We do appreciate you.

It has been really great having teachers who recognise gifted children and work in their school to provide programmes and work with parents and the whānau for the child's learning progress.

I was worried about talking to my child's teacher as I didn't want to be a pushy parent, and it was such a relief when I found him [the teacher] so approachable and easy to discuss issues with.

*My* son's school approached us to discuss ways to extend his learning. It is great when a school is proactive like this.

#### Bringing up a gifted child can be challenging.

It's hard for parents experiencing a high-energy child at home.

*It is very hard work – mental and emotional resources are constantly challenged. We are still waiting for the "It gets easier" bit.* 

The path families have taken to support their children is important. Parents will go to extraordinary lengths to support their gifted child. Working in partnership, they can be a strong support for the school and teacher.

I have to advocate for my child, or else my child's wonderful ideas and energy would be mellowed in favour of conformity.

*Gifted children are intense – they can see a need for truth at the expense of tact.* 

We are often parenting very sensitive and aware children who find the school environment challenging.



#### Supporting and encouraging gifted children

*Gifted children need affirming for their efforts and success, the same as every other child.* 

We want the child's happiness and enthusiasm as the main focus.

*Gifted children should not be made to fit others' views of how they should be.* 

*Gifted children can be very divergent thinkers. Their ideas tend to come out of far left, and they can see ambiguity where none was intended.* 

They don't have to act gifted all the time.

She sees multi-solutions and so becomes confused. She is disorganised and untidy. She is not the wonderful teacher pleaser that puts pretty flowers around her work. She loves to learn, not to please. She is going at 100 knots all the time.

Gifted children can be your best friend or your worst nightmare, and the difference is how you engage and extend them. Accept that they are "different".





Cathcart, R. (2005). "Working with Parents". *They're Not Bringing My Brain Out*, 3rd ed. Auckland: Hodder Education.

#### (Written for teachers)

Coil, C. (2003). *Working with Parents and Families*. Occasional Paper. Moorabbin, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education. (Written for teachers)

Fraser, N. (2004). "Parenting". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press.

Ministry of Education (2004). *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars.* Wellington: Learning Media.

Riley, T. (1999). "Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships between Parents and Teachers". www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/ reading/confpapers/tango\_e.php

Rogers, K. (2002). *Re-forming Gifted Education: How Parents and Teachers Can Match the Program to the Child.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Smutny, J. (2001). Stand up for Your Gifted Child: How to Make the Most of Kids' Strengths at School and at Home. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Strip, C. (2000). *Helping Gifted Children Soar: A Practical Guide for Parents and Teachers*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

New Zealand Association for Gifted Children. *Tall Poppies: Magazine of the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children.* vol. 23 nos. 3 and 4, 1998.

Walker, S. (1991). The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids: How to Understand, Live with, and Stick up for Your Gifted Child. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.



## Summary

## What Education Services Are Available for the Gifted and Talented?

- The Ministry of Education provides policy advice to the Minister of Education and oversees implementation of all government policy decisions about education.
- Early childhood services are funded and regulated separately from the compulsory school sector.
- Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa/Early Childhood Curriculum is founded on the principles of equitable opportunities for learning and on recognising, acknowledging, and building on each child's special strengths.
- The Ministry of Education publication *Initiatives for Gifted and Talented Learners* sets out policy direction in regard to gifted learners.
- Support is available for schools in the form of gifted and talented education advisers, the *Gifted and Talented Students* handbook, and the Gifted and Talented Community on the TKI website, which is also available to parents.

#### How Can We Work Together?

- Gifted and talented children must be identified and have their learning needs addressed with appropriate learning opportunities.
- Such learning opportunities should be matched to the child's intellectual and emotional needs.
- Parents, teachers, and the gifted child themselves can work together to enhance the child's learning achievements.
- Some gifted children also experience learning difficulties or disabilities. Such children need to receive support for their difficulties while being challenged to build on their strengths and interests.
- Parent-teacher conferences can help both parents and teachers to set goals and make plans that will suit the needs of the child.





## A Final Word

### A Final Word

Research and common sense highlight that parents play a vital role in nurturing and developing their children's gifts and talents. Hopefully, the information contained in this book will be helpful to you in this role. This book will not have answered all your questions, but the resources listed may lead you to further useful information and assistance.

There are two final, important messages. Although parenting a gifted child is an important part of your life, it is not your whole life. It is very easy to become overly concerned about assisting your child to develop their potential. James Webb, Elizabeth Meckstroth, and Stephanie Tolan point out in *Guiding the Gifted Child* (1982) that "it is easy to let the entire family focus on gifted children, with resulting depression and underlying resentment in you or elsewhere in the family" (page 200). Therefore, it is important that you work on meeting your own needs just as conscientiously as you strive to meet the needs of your gifted child. Seek help from others: friends, family members, parents of other gifted children, teachers, or anyone who understands the challenges you face and can support you. Sound advice comes from Judy Galbraith:

Even if your child is the most profoundly gifted person in the history of the world, parenting is only part of who you are. Some moms and dads literally live for their gifted kids. There's more to life! Love your child. Do your best to meet his needs at home. Spend time together. Try your best to get him an education that's stimulating, rewarding and satisfying. Be there for him. And make time for yourself ... When you take care of yourself, you teach your child to do the same.

Galbraith, 2000, page 107

The second message is to appreciate the positives of having a gifted child. As parents point out:

They are wonderful, a joy, so special, so wise, so understanding and continually shock and surprise with their insight and depth.

Our gifted son is biologically eight (but three going on sixteen emotionally). His egocentricity makes him immature but his feedback in very difficult situations is wiser at times than I could have worked out!

Gifted children intrigue us and make us laugh because they read stories to the cat, know every detail of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, take a pocket encyclopedia to bed, or see a playground slide as a gravity slope.

If you had one wish, what would it be? Mine would be to have more wishes because then I could have everything I wanted.

> 3-D Mask Artist aged eight Paper with oil pastels





Appendix 1 Support Services and Resources for Parents and Caregivers Note: As mentioned in the introduction, there are many websites that provide valuable information about the gifted and talented. However, because websites and their details are changing all the time, this document only refers to those websites that are crucial to the details discussed in the text. Readers can find reference to other useful websites on the Ministry of Education's TKI website at: www.tki.org.nz/e/community/gifted

## General Information about Supporting Your Child's Education in New Zealand

Information at early childhood, school, and tertiary levels is available at: www.teamup.co.nz

## New Zealand Parents' Associations (Gifted Children)

See www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/talented/parents/ associations\_e.php for recent information and contact details about associations in New Zealand.

#### New Zealand Association for Gifted Children

The NZAGC has a number of regional branches that provide support for gifted children and their families and educators through:

- Club days regular meetings, with organised speakers and activities, for member families
- Holiday activities
- Family camps and sleepovers
- Courses
- Branch library
- Parent-teacher evenings
- Regular newsletters.

The Association has a library from which members can borrow, publishes a magazine for parents and teachers called *Tall Poppies: Magazine of the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children*, and provides a website discussion forum where parents can talk to each other, discuss challenges, share resources, and so on. For details email: president@giftedchildren.org.nz

#### Canterbury Association for Gifted Children and Youth

This is a support network for families and professionals. Its Discoverers' Club offers gifted young people the opportunity to meet with gifted peers: president@cagcy.org.nz

## North Canterbury Support for Gifted and Talented Children Inc.

This parent support group provides a Challenge Club for school-age children and an early childhood group: NCSGTC, PO Box 508, Rangiora

#### Local Ministry of Education Offices

You can ask regional Ministry offices for information about g ifted children and local contacts. www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/talented/parents/contacts\_e.php

## Organisations

#### George Parkyn National Centre for Gifted Education

The Centre gives professional support to parents and teachers of gifted children and runs One Day Schools in many regions. It also runs GO, an interactive online version of the One Day School programme: www.georgeparkyncentre.org

#### **Gifted Kids Programme**

The following website gives information about and contact details of the schools that operate the one-day-a-week Gifted Kids Programme in some regions of New Zealand: www.giftedkids.co.nz

#### Mensa

Admission to Mensa New Zealand is for those who are in the top 2 percent on recognised IQ tests. Mensa is open to all ages. www.mensa.org.nz

#### Virtual School for the Gifted

This Australian organisation can serve the needs of students anywhere in the world. Students can be enrolled in courses by their parents or school. The courses are generally aimed at nineto fifteen-year-olds. www.vsg.edu.au

## Psychologists, Counsellors, and Therapists

Local NZAGC branches may be able to recommend counsellors or psychologists in the area.

Read "Selecting a Psychologist or Psychiatrist for Your Gifted Child" on www.sengifted.org Despite the name of this pamphlet, the advice is about counsellors or therapists as much as psychologists. It gives points to consider about whether your child needs a therapist and what you should ask a therapist.

Another article to read on this website is "Tips for Selecting the Right Counsellor or Therapist for Your Gifted Child" by James Webb (SENG Newsletter 2001).

### **Publications and Websites**

Many books and websites have been recommended throughout this book for further reading on particular topics. Not all of that information has been repeated here. The following is a list of some of the many excellent resources available. Please visit www.tki.org.nz/e/community/gifted for further ideas and links to other sources.

#### Websites

#### Websites for Parents

#### Austega

Australian site for parents and teachers with links, articles, activities for preschool children and older children: www.austega.com/gifted

#### Hoagies

Just about everything you need to know: www.hoagiesgifted.org/parents.htm You may want to start with Gifted 101 at www.hoagiesgifted.org/gifted 101.htm

#### GT World

Online family support communities, frequently asked questions about testing, articles, reading lists for children and parents, links to other sites: http://gtworld.org/gttest.htm

#### Linda Silverman's site

Information on identification, assessment, counselling, visual spatial learners: www.giftedevelopment.com

#### Renzulli Learning System

A child's interests and learning styles are matched with challenging downloadable learning opportunities from databases, for example, virtual field trips, creativity activities, competitions, books, and projects:

http://parents.renzullilearning.com/main.aspx

#### SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted)

Articles on social emotional issues (some specifically for parents), counselling and psychological issues, and adult giftedness: www.SENGifted.org

#### Tracy Riley's Massey University site

Links to many sites, associations, journals, discussion groups, book publishers: http://education.massey.ac.nz/depart/education/ staff/cp/riley-tracy.cfm

#### Visual-Spatial

For parents and teachers. Articles and strategies regarding visual-spatial learners (including those with learning disabilities), books. Also great cartoons: www.visualspatial.org
#### Publications

The following books have been written for parents or for parents and teachers:

Coil, C. (2003). Surviving the Middle Years: Strategies for Student Engagement, Growth, and Learning. Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

This text aims to inform about the 10- to 15-year age group in regard to social, emotional, and intellectual development, the school environment, the importance of friends, and becoming an independent person.

Delisle, J. and Galbraith, J. (2002). *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Written for teachers, counsellors, and parents, this book offers practical suggestions for encouraging social and emotional growth among gifted children (particularly adolescents). Topics include emotional dimensions of giftedness, self-image, underachievement, perfectionism, and boredom.

Galbraith, J. (2000). *You Know Your Child is Gifted When ...:* A Beginner's Guide to Life on the Bright Side. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

This very readable small book for parents is filled with cartoons, anecdotes about children, and useful information and advice.

Harrison, C. (2003). *Giftedness in Early Childhood*, 3rd ed. Sydney: GERRIC, University of New South Wales.

This text, written for parents and educators, includes information on characteristics of giftedness, identification checklists, and strategies to use for educating children in early childhood.

Jacob, A. and Barnsley, G., eds (1996). *Gifted Children: The Challenge Continues: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*. Strathfield, NSW: Association for Gifted and Talented Children. This anthology consists of many short articles by parents and educators on subjects such as differentiation, parenting, acceleration, and social emotional needs.



Kerr, B. (1996). Smart Girls Two: A New Psychology of Girls, Women and Giftedness. Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Drawing on her own and others' research findings, the author offers suggestions for guiding gifted girls from childhood through to adulthood.

Kerr, B. (2001). *Smart Boys: Talent, Manhood and the Search for Meaning.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

This book explores giftedness and masculinity, discusses special challenges facing gifted boys, and offers suggestions for parents and teachers.

Khatena, J. and Khatena, N. (1999). *Developing Creative Talent in Art: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*. Connecticut: Ablex Publishing.

This guide includes chapters on art and creative imagination, creative thinking and problem solving applied to art, the magic of colour, and evaluating student artwork.

McAlpine, D. and Moltzen, R., eds (2004). *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, 2nd ed. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press. This is a comprehensive text specifically aimed at educators and parents in New Zealand. Topics covered include concepts of giftedness, identification, creativity, gifted Māori children, differentiation in schools and early childhood services, underachievement, social and emotional development, and parenting.

Mares, L. (1991). *Young Gifted Children*. Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

This small, easily read book for parents and teachers covers characteristics of giftedness, identification, emotional and personality issues, and strategies for parents to help develop their children's potential.

Mares, L. (1993). *Adolescence and Giftedness*. Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Content includes teaching gifted adolescents cognitive freedom and self-discipline, developing genuine peer relationships, and the move from adolescence to adulthood. Matthews, D. and Foster, J. (2005). *Being Smart about Gifted Children: A Guidebook for Parents and Educators.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

This book includes chapters on creativity, testing, identification, educational options, social and emotional issues, parenting, and advocacy.

Morelock, M. and Morrison, K. (1996). *Gifted Children Have Talents Too: Multidimensional Programmes for the Gifted in Early Childhood.* Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education. Written for parents and educators, this book covers early childhood development, developing talent potential, assessing giftedness, and curriculum in mixed-ability classrooms. It includes a parent checklist.

Perry, S. (1991). *Playing Smart: A Parent's Guide to Enriching, Offbeat Learning Activities for Ages 4–14.* Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Ideas for learning range from "Dirt, Worms, Bugs and Mud" or "Junior Psychologist" to "Cultural Diversity". This book is all about brainstorming and open-ended questions that encourage children in problem solving and creative thinking. There is a useful section on introducing famous authors through their books for children.

Porter, L. (2005). *Gifted Young Children: A Guide for Teachers and Parents*, 2nd ed. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin. Especially useful in regard to young children, this comprehensive text is also useful in bringing together and discussing much current thinking about giftedness. Topics include self-esteem issues, social needs, parenting, learning needs, and gifted children with learning disabilities. The first edition (1999) also contains a chapter on management of behaviour.

Rimm, S. (1994). *Keys to Parenting the Gifted Child*. New York: Barron's Educational Series.

This book covers how to: determine whether your child is gifted, work with schools, manage problems, and advocate for your child.

Saunders, J. and Espeland, P. (1991). *Bringing out the Best: A Resource Guide for Parents of Young Gifted Children*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Specifically aimed at parents of 2- to 7-year-old gifted children, this text gives practical advice from many experts and parents and includes many illustrative real-life examples. Topics include how to tell whether your child is gifted and some of the implications of being gifted, how to avoid parental burnout, and practical activities to share with and stimulate your child. It provides a checklist of things to look for and ask when choosing an early childhood service and suggests how to advocate for your child at school.

Sisk, D. and Torrance, E.P. (2001). *Spiritual Intelligence: Developing Higher Consciousness*. New York: Creative Education Foundation Press.

Topics include characteristics of spiritual giftedness, how to tap into your intuition and visualisation to use your inner knowing, and individuals who shaped their own and others' lives to make a difference.

Smutny, J. (2001). Stand up for Your Gifted Child: How to Make the Most of Kids' Strengths at School and at Home. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Written to advise parents on advocating for their child at school and providing enrichment at home, this book also helps parents to understand their child's giftedness and assist them with friendships and other issues. It concludes with a chapter on how parents can take care of themselves.

Strip, C. (2000). *Helping Gifted Children Soar: A Practical Guide for Parents and Teachers.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press. This is a useful book for parents and teachers because there is a lot about the parent-teacher partnership. The text also suggests how teachers and parents can give gifted children emotional and social support and includes a question-and-answer section.

Vail, P. (1993). *Gifted, Precocious or Just Plain Smart: A Story for Puzzled Parents.* Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

This lively account reminds us that children need a chance to be children and have fun as well as have their giftedness nurtured.



Walker, S. (1991). *The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids: How to Understand, Live with, and Stick up for Your Gifted Child.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

This easily read text explains such subjects as giftedness, identification, the bell curve, perfectionism, and underachievement. It also discusses many issues relating to bringing up gifted children, including ways of coping and staying in touch, schooling, and advocacy. A section of frequently asked questions gives practical, reassuring advice to parents.

Ward, C. (2001). *The Parents Homework Handbook*, 2nd ed. Christchurch: Accelerated Learning Institute. This text offers many ideas for finding the ideal conditions for your child to learn, for example, using multi-sensory methods, memory anchors, music, and movement.

Webb, J., Meckstroth, E., and Tolan, S. (1991). *Guiding the Gifted Child: A Practical Source for Parents and Teachers.* Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

This book includes information on problems and opportunities, identification, stress management, discipline, peer and sibling relationships, and depression.

Webb, J., Gore, J., Karnes, F., and McDaniel, A. (2004). *Grandparents' Guide to Gifted Children*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

This text includes information on early signs of giftedness, the unique role of grandparents, and building bonds.

#### New Zealand Journals

Apex: The New Zealand Journal of Gifted Education. Refereed online journal.

Tall Poppies: Magazine of the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children.

#### **International Parenting Journals**

Parenting for High Potential. Quarterly journal of the National Association for Gifted Children (USA). www.nagc.org Understanding Our Gifted. Online journal for parents. www.our-gifted.com

## **Recent Research and Conference Papers**

Riley, T., Bevan-Brown, J., Bicknell, B., Carroll-Lind, J., and Kearney, A. (2004). *The Extent, Nature and Effectiveness of Planned Approaches in New Zealand Schools for Identifying and Providing for Gifted and Talented Students.* Palmerston North: Massey University.

www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/gifted

Rising Tides Conference, Wellington, 3–5 August 2006. To view workshop presentations and download papers, see: www.giftedtalentedconf2006.org.nz

Information on other research can be accessed from many of the websites listed earlier in this publications list and from Joseph Renzulli's National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented in the US: www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt.html

## **Cultural Issues and Giftedness**

For discussion of cultural issues in the New Zealand research report mentioned above, see: www.hoagiesgifted.org/esl.htm

For articles on gifted children who speak English as a second language, see: www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/gifted

Bevan-Brown, J. (2004). "Gifted and Talented Māori Learners". In *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*, ed. D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Press.

Bevan-Brown, J. (2004). "What NAG Change?" Proceedings of the Teacher Education Forum of New Zealand (TEFANZ) Conference, July 2004, Auckland. (Also published on the TKI Gifted and Talented Community website.)

Torrance, P., Goff, K., and Satterfield, N. (1997). *Multicultural Mentoring of the Gifted and Talented*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press. Topics include identifying possible mentors, developing relationships, and putting ideas into practice.



# Study Courses for Parents

See the TKI website or websites of each college of education or university for information on current courses available.

# Advocacy/Establishing Support Groups

Gilman, B. (2003). *Empowering Gifted Minds: Educational Advocacy That Works*. Denver, Colo.: DeLeon Publishing. Topics include testing, curriculum differentiation, and models of advocacy for parents. This text also includes case studies and children's own accounts.

Smutny, J. (2001). *Stand up for Your Gifted Child: How to Make the Most of Kids' Strengths at School and at Home.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Chapter 10: Connecting with Other Parents includes what makes an effective parent group and starting a new parent group.





Appendix 2 Support Services and Resources for Children

### Websites

www.hoagiesgifted.org/young\_kids.htm Lots of activities for young children.

www.hoagiesgifted.org/hoagies\_kids.htm Activities for school-aged children.

#### www.emap.rsnz.org

Part of the international GLOBE network of students, teachers, and scientists working together to study and understand the **global environment**.

#### www.globalnet.org.nz

Aimed at 10- to 16-year-olds. Social action projects, mentors, and e-pals. Ideas for **investigations on global issues**.

#### www.dosomething.org

Resources and support to a nationwide network of young people who are taking **action to improve their communities**.

#### www.epals.com

Find an **e-pal** with similar interests. Site includes translation facilities and a monitoring facility for content.

#### www.omvirtuallythere.co.nz/home.asp

Virtually There allows visitors to view objects from the **Otago Museum** electronically.

#### www.exploratorium.edu

A **virtual museum** experience at this museum of science, art, and human perception.

#### www.mos.org/leonardo

Biography of **Leonardo da Vinci**, activities, photos, information, and techniques to explore, for example, perspective.

#### www.nga.gov/kids/zone

**Artists Online**: Children of all ages can design a virtual mobile, or create a painting, collage, or sculpture. This site links to the US National Art Gallery's collection to show how artists create these same effects.

#### http://uneli.unitec.ac.nz/experts/home.php

**Ask an Expert** for students – arts, science, languages, computing, and so on.

#### www.ajkids.com

**Ask Jeeves Kids:** Ask a question, find information on a wide range of subjects, and find answers to questions about games.

#### www.nasa.gov

**NASA** website with interactive projects, games, and animations; information on topics such as planets, rockets, and astronauts; and children's contributions of art and stories.

#### www.hunkinsexperiments.com

Presented in cartoon format. **Experiments** for primary-age children – science, sound, maths, using materials, and so on.

#### http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html

**Neuroscience for Kids:** Learn about the brain and nervous system. Includes information, experiments, resources, links, games, questions and answers, and students' work.

#### http://publish.uwo.ca/~cagis/

Canadian association for **Girls in Science.** Colourful site aimed at ages 7–16. *Yes* magazine online, virtual membership available, and many links.

#### sunsite.berkeley.edu/KidsClick!

A **search engine** for kids designed by librarians. Includes encyclopedias, science, arts, music, books, biography, politics, ghosts, and religion.

#### www.ala.org/parentspage

American Library Association listing of many **sites** recommended especially for parents and children. Very comprehensive. Under Great Websites for Kids is advice on and criteria for: How to tell if you are looking at a great website.

#### www.kidspsych.org

**Kidspsych:** The theme of understanding ourselves and each other. Games for young children. Colourful site.

#### www.funbrain.com

Download and play **games** offline. Maths, reading, and vocabulary games for young to older children, at differing levels of difficulty.

#### www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/talented/parents/links\_e.php Provides links to activities and brain teasers for students.

#### http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/science/flash. html

This website looks at some ingenious inventions in **history**. It includes a game for children to identify inventions from historical photos.

#### http://mathworld.wolfram.com

Comprehensive **maths** website useful for secondary school students.

#### www.bubbledome.co.nz

**Bubbledome** for 5- to 13-year-olds invites children to read a story and submit their ideas as to how problems could be solved.

#### Website Safety for Children

#### www.learn-now.school.nz

A website that includes online extensions and enrichment programmes for 7–15-year-olds.

#### www.netsafe.org.nz

The website for the Internet Safety Group of New Zealand, with information for parents and children.

#### www.cyberkidz.co.nz

Safety points and safe links for children compiled by the team at *Netguide Magazine*.



## Books

#### Book Lists

Lots of reading lists for fiction, biography, topics, and so on: www.hoagiesgifted.org/reading\_lists.htm www.nswagtc.org.au/info/books/books.html

Halsted, J. (2002). Some of My Best Friends Are Books: Guiding Gifted Readers from Preschool to High School, 2nd ed. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Annotated lists of books for children of all ages under categories such as aloneness, creativity, intensity, using ability, and perfectionism.

#### Books for Children and Young People

Adderholdt-Elliot, M. (1999). *Perfectionism: What's Bad about Being Too Good?* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

This is a text suitable for both teenagers and parents, written in the readable style of survival guides for gifted children. Topics include: how and why people become perfectionist and the resulting effects on the body, learning to fail and to laugh, turning negative experiences into positive opportunities, setting reasonable standards, and accepting praise from others.

Armstrong, T. (2003). *You're Smarter than You Think*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Aimed at ages 8–12, this is a guide to the theory of multiple intelligences. Each chapter includes a quick quiz and description of the kind of intelligence along with tips, tasks, and resources for developing and strengthening that area.

Cohen, L. and Frydenberg, E. (1993). *Coping for Capable Kids: Strategies for Teachers, Parents, Students.* Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Half of this book is written for children and is suitable for intermediate and secondary ages.

Covey, S. (1998). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. New York: Fireside.

Written for teens in an entertaining style, this text provides a guide to building friendship, resisting peer pressure, achieving goals, and discovering talents. Galbraith, J. (1992). The Gifted Kid's Survival Guide (Ages 11–18). Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education. The author consulted with over 300 gifted US teenagers. The book talks directly to teenagers, discusses their "eight great gripes", and suggests how they can improve school life, reduce stress, make friends, improve relationships with parents, set realistic goals, get motivated, and stick up for themselves.

Galbraith, J. (1998). The Gifted Kid's Survival Guide (for Ages 10 and under). Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. Revised, updated, and written for gifted children, this text explains what giftedness is all about, how to make the most of school, and how to socialise successfully.

Galbraith, J. and Delisle, J. (1996). *The Gifted Kid's Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. This book provides information on giftedness, school success, and how to survive as a gifted teen.

Hipp, E. (1985). *Fighting Invisible Tigers: A Stress Management Guide for Teens*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

This very readable book for teens covers such topics as being assertive, making decisions, using positive self-talk, and staying healthy.

Lewis, B. (1992). *Kids with Courage.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. This collection of true stories from children who have stood up for their beliefs is aimed at ages 11 and upward.

Lewis, B. (1998). The Kids' Guide to Social Action: How to Solve the Social Problems You Choose – and Turn Creative Thinking into Positive Action. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

This step-by-step guide to writing letters, conducting interviews, making speeches, raising funds, and so on for causes of their choice is aimed at ages 10 and upward.

Rimm, S. (1993). *Gifted Kids Have Feelings Too and Other Not-so-fictitious Stories for and about Teenagers*. Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

These stories are to let teens know they are not alone in struggling with teenage issues like popularity, achievement, friendship, and loneliness.

Rimm, S. (2003). *See Jane Win for Girls: A Smart Girl's Guide to Success.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. Aimed at ages 9–13, this book gives tips and tools for being confident, capable, eager to learn, and ready to lead. It includes quizzes, resources, and advice from successful women.

#### **Biography series**

The five series in this list are names of sets of books with separate titles. The final item is a collection.

Famous New Zealand Men. Wellington: Kotuku Publishing. For example, *Charles Upham*.

Famous New Zealand Women. Wellington: Kotuku Publishing. For example, *Whina Cooper, Margaret Mahy.* 

Famous New Zealanders. Wellington: Kotuku Publishing. For example, *Catherine Tizard*.

People in New Zealand History, series 2. Petone: Nelson Price Milburn. For example, *Guide Rangi, Frances Hodgkins, Ernest Rutherford.* 

Women in Profile. New York: Crabtree Publishing Co. Separate titles are *Explorers, Musicians, Nobel Prize Winners, Political Leaders, Scientists, Writers.* 

Dunkle, M., ed. (1989). *The Story Makers II.* Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.

This collection of interviews with Australian and New Zealand authors and illustrators of children's and young people's books also includes advice to young writers and illustrators.

#### Books Containing Templates and Ideas for Research, Time Management, Organisation, and Goal Setting

Buzan, T. (2005). *Mind Maps for Kids.* London: Thorsons. This book covers memory, planning, and concentration techniques. It includes visual-spatial strategies, such as memory movies.

Coil, C. (2005). *Becoming an Achiever: A Student Guide*. Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Written for students of all ages, this text covers topics such as goal setting, time management, study skills, and so on.

Gawith, G. (1988). *Action Learning: Student Guide to Research and Information Skills*. Auckland: Longman Paul.

Gawith, G. (1991). *Ripping into Research: Information Skills for Secondary and Tertiary students.* Auckland: Longman Paul.

Gawith, G. (1991). *Power Learning: A Student's Guide to Success*. Lower Hutt: Mill Publications.

Gawith, G. (1996). *Learning Alive: A Guide to Learning for Secondary* Students, Tertiary Students and All Teachers. Auckland: Longman Paul.

Gawith, G. (2002). Research Success. Auckland: ESA Publications.

Heacox, D. (1991). *Up from Underachievement: How Teachers, Parents and Students Can Work Together to Promote Student Success.* Cheltenham, Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education. This text includes an action plan to work on and many reproducible masters. Learning and social emotional issues are addressed. Parts are especially written for students, parents, and teachers.

(See also: Adderholdt-Elliot and Cohen and Frydenberg listed on page 157.)

## Magazines

*Creative Kids: The National Voice for Kids.* Waco, TX: Prufrock Press. Games, art, children's writing. Aimed at 8–14 years. www.prufrock.com

#### Galaxy: Te Korurangi.

New Zealand space and astronomy magazine for children – stories, cartoons, puzzles, information on the night sky, and so on (available in some public libraries).

www.was.org.nz/01youngpeople.html

*Helix.* The Magazine of the CSIRO's Double Helix Science Club. An Australian magazine with articles, competitions and experiments (available in some public libraries in New Zealand). www.csiro.au/helix

*Imagine* (for intermediate and high school students) Center for Talented Youth, John Hopkins University. Articles, information, counselling. http://cty.jhu.edu/imagine/

*National Geographic Kids Magazine* online. http://kids.nationalgeographic.com

*Stone Soup.* A magazine for children aged 8–13 to submit their art and writing.





Some stories can be listened to online. http://stonesoup.com

*Tall Poppies: Magazine of the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children.* A magazine of NZAGC for gifted children, their families, and professionals.

For lists of magazines and links, see also: www.hoagiesgifted.org/magazines.htm

## Software

Inspiration For structuring ideas, planning, brainstorming, sequencing, and organising. www.inspiration.com

Reason!Able A software package that engages students in critical thinking exercises by requiring them to construct their reasoning using interactive diagrams. www.goreason.com

For further ideas, go to: www.hoagiesgifted.org/software.htm

# Clubs and Programmes for Children

Holiday seminars for children: www.holidayseminars.co.nz

#### Christchurch School for Young Writers

This correspondence writing programme for 8- to 18-year-olds offers extension for home or classroom. Teenagers can contribute to the Re-Draft publication. This competition is open to all, not just those enrolled in the school.

www.geocities.com/school4youngwriters/

Messages section on www.tki.org.nz/e/community/gifted

Section in Appendix 1 about parents' associations (page 140). Many of these have clubs and activities for children.

# **Career Information**

For students and parents, see: www.kiwicareers.govt.nz www.edcentre.govt.nz/





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Still Life Flowers Artist aged ten Finger painted with acrylic paints

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