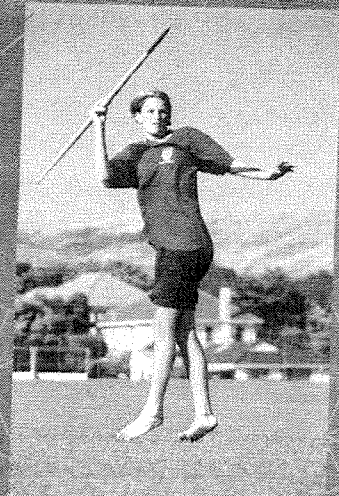
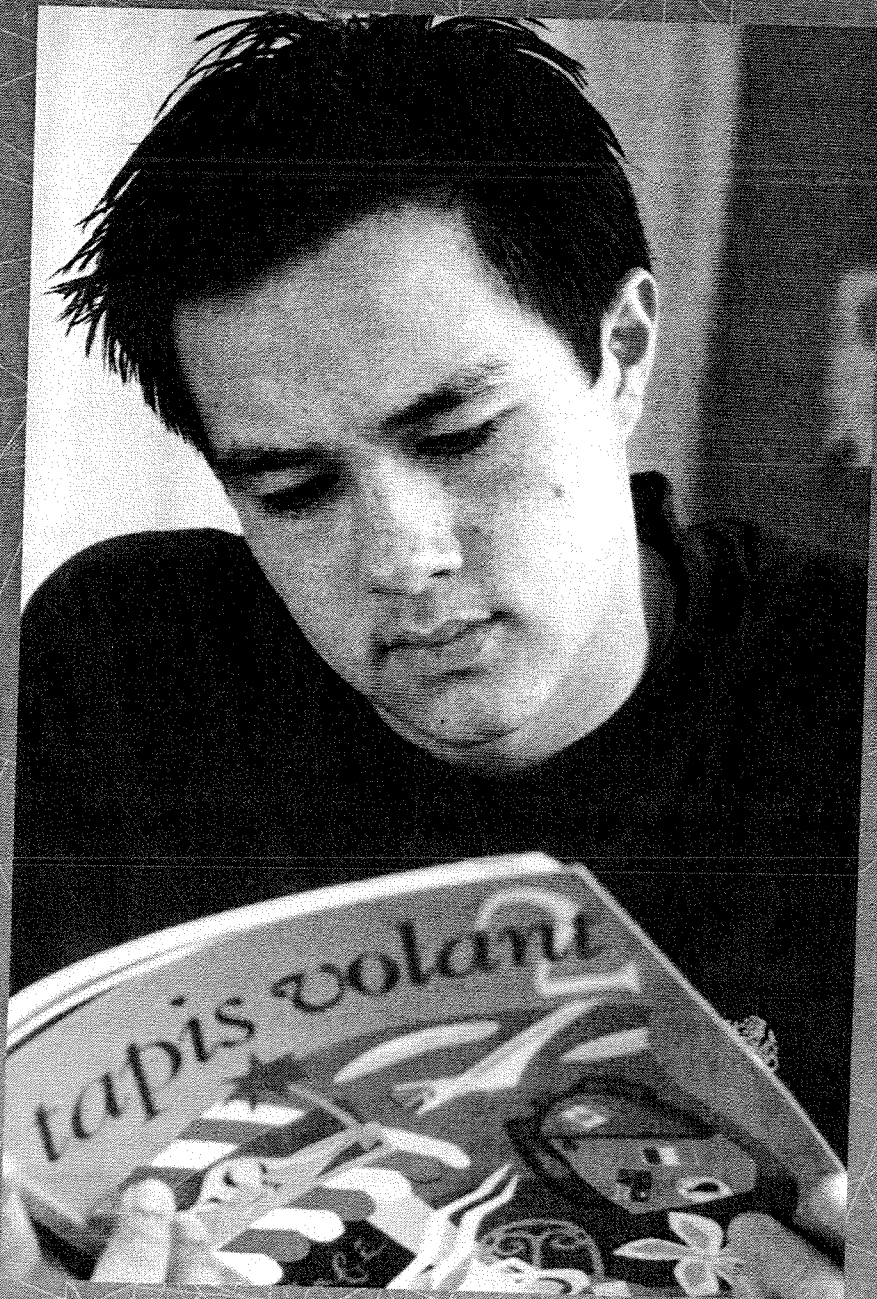
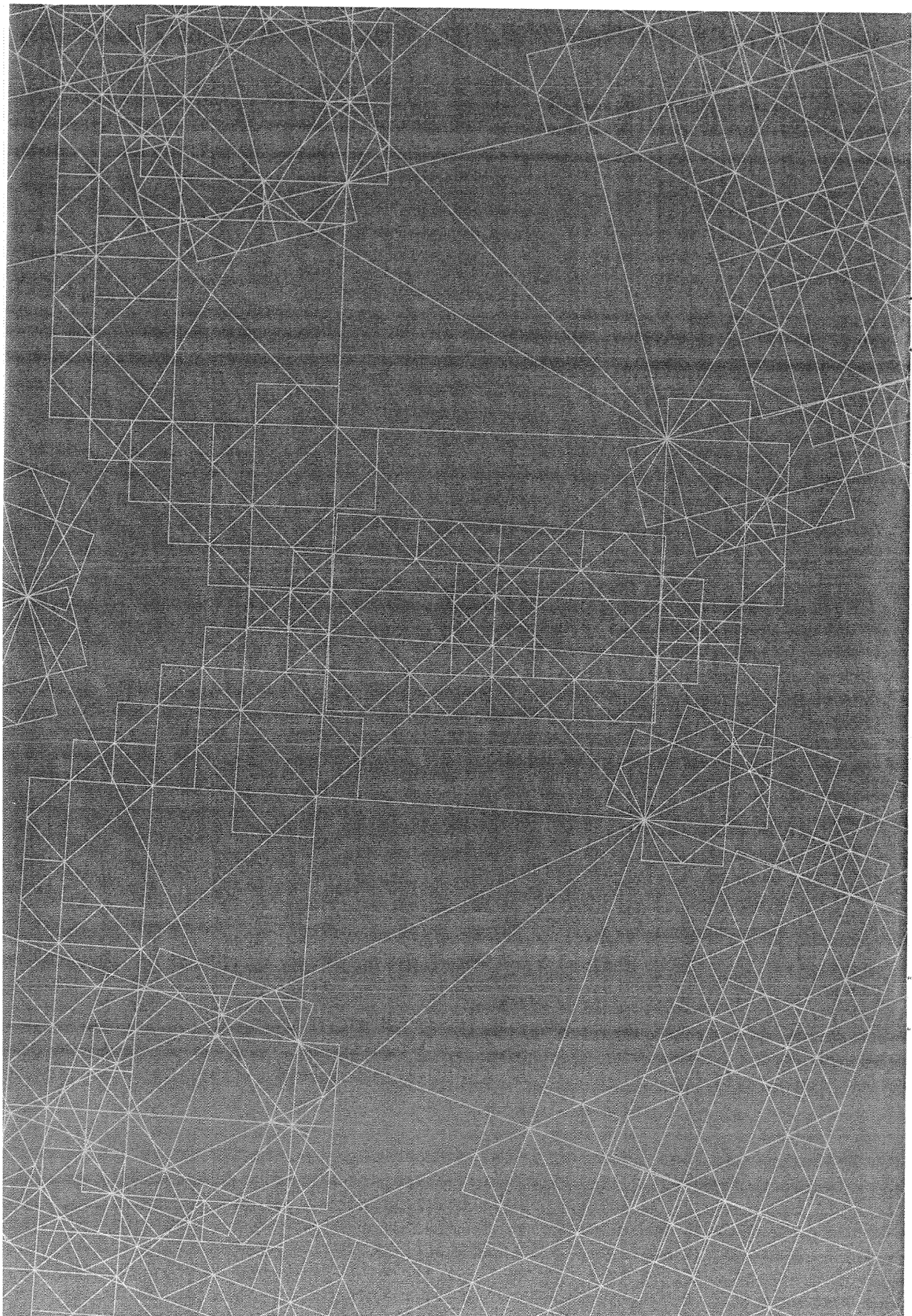


Gifted and Talented Students

Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools





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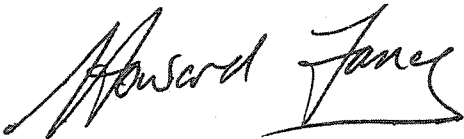
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Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools aims to support schools and teachers in assisting gifted and talented students to reach their full potential academically, emotionally, and socially. It has been published in response to the growing awareness that many of our gifted and talented students go unrecognised, and that those who are identified often do not take part in an educational programme appropriate to their needs.

Enabling our gifted and talented students to reach their full potential will make an important contribution to the Ministry of Education's mission of "raising achievement and reducing disparity". The revised National Administrative Guidelines provides boards of trustees and school leaders with the responsibility and authority to meet the learning needs of this group of students.

Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools is intended for principals, senior managers, and key teachers responsible for programmes for gifted and talented students. It provides information to assist with the development of a school policy and the identification of gifted and talented students. It discusses a range of principles and practices in the education of gifted and talented students, and it presents models on which schools can base their own programmes to best meet the needs of their students.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed their experience and expertise to the development of this publication.



Howard Fancy
Secretary for Education

Introduction

This book is intended for the educators of New Zealand. One of the great joys and privileges of being a teacher is sharing in the development of a young person's exceptional ability. It is equally gratifying to then observe that special ability being realised in adult achievement. Many eminent adults, when asked to identify the critical factors contributing to their outstanding accomplishments, point to support that teachers provided.

There is a growing awareness of the special needs of gifted and talented students and of the importance of providing them with an educational environment that offers maximum opportunities to develop their special abilities. There is also an increased acknowledgment that these young people represent one of our country's greatest natural resources and that failure to support them appropriately in their schooling may see this potential go unrealised.



Teachers are becoming more aware of the consequences of not attending to the needs of the gifted and talented. The research in this area is conclusive and irrefutable: failure to recognise and meet the needs of the gifted and talented can result in their boredom, frustration, mediocrity, and even hostility.

Certainly, many students are not deterred by a system that fails to support the development of their special abilities. Some of this group may compensate for an unrewarding school environment by finding fulfilment in activities beyond the school gate. However, others may choose to deny their abilities in an attempt to fit in. A significant number of our more able students simply "give up", leave school prematurely, and often never pursue those areas where they once showed so much promise.

New Zealand teachers are attuned to the needs of individual students and skilled in student-centred strategies. In addition, the national curriculum allows students to work at levels matching their abilities. The combination of these two elements has the potential to create an effective learning environment for the gifted and talented. What needs to be added is a co-ordinated school-wide approach that provides teachers with a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the gifted and talented as well as with the strategies to meet these needs.

Our National Education Guidelines require schools to assist all children to realise their full potential, to identify and remove barriers to achievement, and identify and support those students with special needs. *Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools* has been designed to provide schools with information from which they can develop their own approaches to meeting these requirements. Consequently, the information provided is not prescriptive. It includes a range of perspectives and possibilities to help each school tailor its response to the nature and needs of its students and community.

Although many ideas included in this resource inform classroom practice, it is intended for boards of trustees and principals as well as for classroom teachers because all of them are involved in decision making at this level. Examples to illustrate strategies or to elaborate on approaches outlined in this book will be provided at the Ministry of Education's Gifted and Talented Internet site at www.tki.org.nz

In many schools, there will be much discussion and debate about the preferred term to describe these students. The alternatives are many – students/children with special abilities; students with high potential; gifted; gifted and talented; able; more able; exceptional; and so on. The term "gifted and talented" is used here mainly because it is most widely used internationally.

This resource begins with a section outlining how schools might approach the task of developing a school-wide approach for their gifted and talented students. The remainder of the book is divided into two main parts.

Part 1 looks at definitions, characteristics, and identification of gifted and talented students. There has been no attempt to offer a single definition of giftedness and talent. Instead, schools are encouraged to take a multicategorical and multicultural approach and to include special abilities across a range of areas. Any approach must recognise that the incidence of giftedness and talent is not determined by class, culture, or gender.

Part 2 looks at programme development and evaluation. This section explains the essential elements of programmes for gifted and talented students and describes a range of contexts in which these may be offered.



Getting Started

Programmes for the gifted and talented can be tenuous in nature and can appear and then disappear within a very short space of time. This is often because the impetus for a new initiative and the responsibility for its implementation reside with a single staff member. This situation can be avoided with a school-wide commitment to catering for this group of students.

A school policy needs to answer the *why, who, what, where, how, and when* questions.

Developing a Policy

A crucial component in establishing comprehensive and enduring provision for these students is the development of a relevant policy. While a policy does not guarantee appropriate provision in every classroom, it does go a long way to ensuring that these students' needs remain on the school's agenda. A policy also provides something against which approaches can be reviewed and evaluated.

A policy should be developed through consultation inside and outside the school. Parents of gifted students should have an opportunity to be involved. Gifted and talented students themselves can make valuable contributions to specific aspects of policy development. Very often, a school may also require an outside "expert" to guide them in this undertaking.

A school policy needs to answer the *why, who, what, where, how, and when* questions.

Why?

A good starting place is to develop a defensible rationale for providing differentially for these students. This statement should tie in with the overall philosophy of the school.

Who?

Defining *who* the gifted and talented are in a school population is not an easy task. However, to do this a school must first arrive at a definition, because it provides the basis for identification procedures and how gifted students are provided for. Once the definition has been reached, issues of identification can be addressed.

A second question to ask here is *who* will co-ordinate the programme in the school. Programmes for the gifted and talented have more chance of developing and enduring where there is a team approach to co-ordination and where the team includes a member of the school's senior management. It is also essential that the programme is "owned" by the school community. To this end, the team or committee responsible for developing and implementing it should consult widely to reflect the different interest groups in the school and perspectives held by members of staff.

What?

The next stage is the setting of goals and objectives — *what* are we going to do? This part of the process is very important because it not only sets the direction of a school's efforts but also provides criteria against which these efforts can be evaluated.

Many schools have discovered the value of undertaking a gap analysis as a starting point, determining “where we are at and where we are going”. This allows them to evaluate current provisions and practices and to identify the strengths and interests of school staff and members of the local community. This approach is also an excellent way of determining what should be included in a programme of professional development.

Where?

The debate about *where* gifted and talented students are best provided for in the school often constitutes the starting point in the process of planning and development in this area.

However, questions about the appropriateness of a separate class, a withdrawal programme, ability grouping, cluster grouping, and so on can only be answered in an informed way after a school has addressed the *why*, *who* and *what* questions.

The needs of the gifted and talented must be at the forefront when this matter is being decided. Too often their needs become subsumed by concerns about charges of elitism, how other children in the school might feel, or the reactions of parents of children not selected for special programmes.

How and When?

Once the aims and objectives for the programme have been decided, a plan of action needs to be developed detailing *how* these will be met. This plan should include a time frame identifying *when* things will happen. These details are essential if a school is to develop a co-ordinated and consistent approach.

Sometimes new initiatives lose their impetus because the implementation plan is too ambitious. This can occur when the direction is provided by a staff member who is both experienced and enthusiastic but who fails to recognise that some of his or her colleagues may be much less knowledgeable and somewhat diffident.

Some new developments are short lived because the vision was short term. There needs to be a long-term as well as a short-term plan of action.

The question of *how* programmes will be evaluated should be answered as part of the initial planning process. Reid (1996) reports that few New Zealand schools systematically and rigorously assess the effectiveness of their endeavours in this area. He believes this is because programme descriptions are usually brief and provide sketchy information.

A school also needs to ask the question of *how* any new initiatives will be resourced.



Professional Development

Professional development is an essential ingredient in developing, implementing, and maintaining effective programmes for gifted and talented students. Well-planned professional development opportunities for all those involved in education will increase interest in and commitment to the education of the gifted and talented. Dettmer and Landrum (1998) remind us, in their book *Staff Development: The Key to Effective Gifted Education Programs*, that "it has been recognised for more than two decades that teachers do adopt more accepting and facilitative attitudes toward gifted students after just one course in the education of the gifted" (page 1). Since gifted education is seldom addressed (beyond a chapter, a one-off lecture, an optional paper), within pre-service teacher education – in-service professional development is vital.

Educators in New Zealand need specific training and understanding in each of the following areas:

- concepts of giftedness and talent and related behaviours;
- identification methods;
- programming options and curriculum differentiation;
- teaching methods and materials;
- working with special populations among the gifted with particular reference to gender, culture, and disability.

Any programme of professional development needs to be contextually based and to reflect current policies and practices within individual schools. There is an increasing trend towards school-based professional development, where the programme reflects the nature and needs of the individual school.

Roberts and Roberts (1986, page 141) outline areas of concern and suggested professional development focuses as follows:

- *Awareness*: arousing interest and providing information about how the gifted programme relates to other aspects of the school and curriculum.
- *Informational*: providing general information about the gifted programme and what it provides for students.
- *Personal*: providing clarification of role expectations.
- *Management*: providing direction related to day-to-day demands, such as timetabling, funding, and organisation.
- *Consequences*: providing opportunities to examine evaluation issues and refine teaching skills.
- *Collaboration*: providing time for working together, exchanging ideas, and guiding one another.
- *Refocusing*: providing opportunities for new ideas to be piloted.

The professional development may be delivered by an array of individuals, including practitioners, researchers, college of education and university teaching staff, professional consultants, members of advocacy groups, parents of gifted and talented children, cultural experts, and gifted and talented students themselves. Regardless of who the presenters are,

their skills should match the needs and goals of the intended professional development programme.

Opportunities for gifted and talented children will improve only when professional development is included as a goal – for all stakeholders – in a collaborative and consultative manner.

Summary: Getting Started

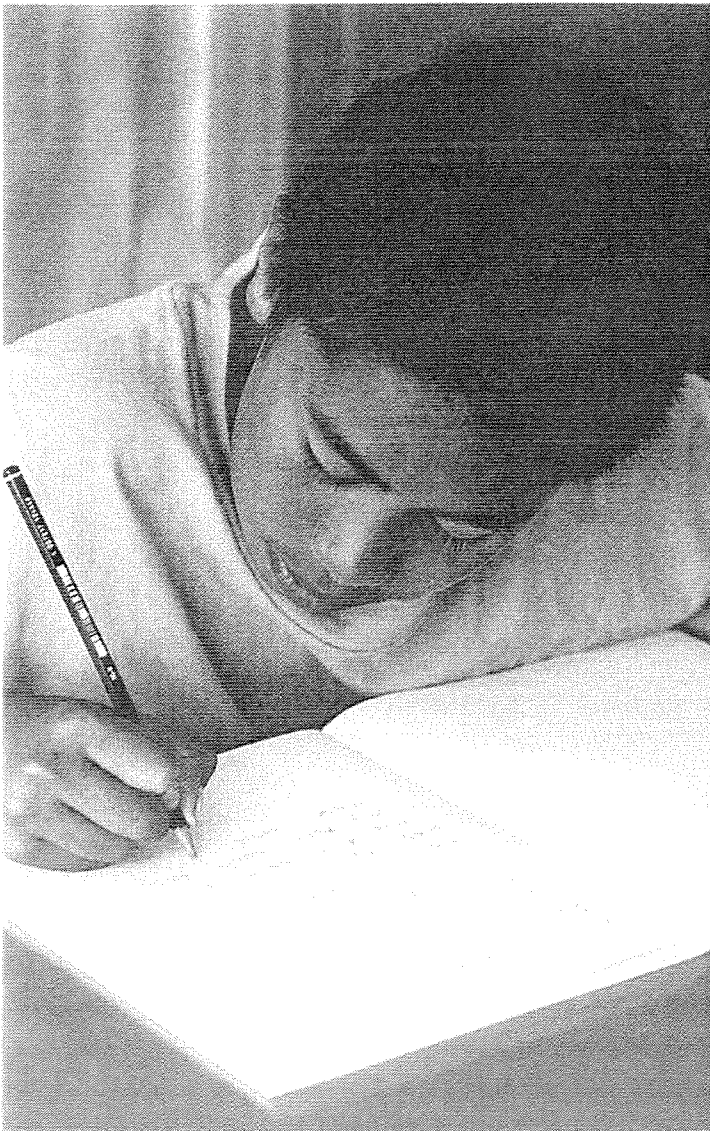
- Frequently, educational initiatives for the gifted and talented are short-lived. This often occurs when the impetus for a new development resides with a single staff member.
- A new programme is more likely to develop and endure if it is based on relevant school policy and implemented through a team approach.
- A policy should be developed through consultation in the school and community.
- A policy for the education of gifted and talented students should address the following issues:
 - Why provide differentially for these students?
 - Who are our gifted and talented in the school, and who will co-ordinate our approach?
 - What are we going to do?
 - Where are we going to do it?
 - How and when will we do it, and how will it be resourced?
- Professional development is particularly important in this area because most teacher education pre-service programmes offer only brief introductions to educating gifted and talented students.
- Effective professional development:
 - is collaboratively planned;
 - is tailored to the nature and needs of the individual school;
 - covers conceptions, identification, programming, curriculum differentiation, teaching methods and resources, and special groups of gifted students;
 - addresses areas of concern.

PART 1: DEFINITIONS, CHARACTERISTICS, AND IDENTIFICATION

Who Are the Gifted and Talented?**A Multicategory Concept**

The gifted and talented represent a wide range of students with many different abilities. Some students, for example, may have exceptional abilities in science or technology, some in art or poetry, and others in social leadership. It is now accepted that the gifted and talented are not simply those with high intelligence.

The range of special abilities that relate to the concept of giftedness and talent has become quite broad over the years and includes general intellectual abilities, academic aptitude, creative abilities, leadership ability, physical abilities, and abilities in the visual and performing arts.

**Multicultural Perspectives**

New Zealand is a multicultural society with a wide range of ethnic groups. The concept of giftedness and talent that belongs to a particular cultural group is shaped by its beliefs, values, attitudes, and customs. The concept varies from culture to culture. It also varies over time.

It is important that each school incorporates relevant cultural values into its concept of giftedness and talent. These values will also influence procedures used for identifying students from different cultural groups and for providing relevant programmes. Culturally diverse and economically disadvantaged students are grossly under-represented in programmes for the gifted and talented. Schools must make a special effort to identify talented students from these groups.

Bevan-Brown (1996) argues that concepts of special abilities for Māori should be viewed as holistic in nature, reflecting Māori values, customs, and beliefs. In her research, she found that Māori value a wide range of abilities and qualities, including spiritual, cognitive, affective, aesthetic, linguistic, artistic, musical, psychomotor, social, intuitive, creative, leadership, and cultural abilities and qualities.

It would be simplistic, however, to equate terms such as spiritual, artistic, musical, or leadership with

Pākehā meanings of the terms. Māori have their own interpretations, which should be understood in their relationship to Māori culture. Māori also tend to expect these abilities and qualities to be used in the service of others.

Concepts and Definitions

The change from a single to a multcategory concept of giftedness and talent has been paralleled by changes in the concept of intelligence itself. No longer seen as a single entity, it is now viewed in terms of multiple intelligences.

Foremost amongst the proponents of multiple intelligences is Gardner (1993), who has postulated eight intelligences:

- Logical-mathematical
- Linguistic
- Bodily-kinesthetic
- Spatial
- Musical
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Naturalistic

In many ways, these can be seen as areas of special ability rather than intelligences. In fact, Gardner defines these intelligences as sets of abilities, talents, or mental skills that enable individuals to solve problems or fashion products in such a way as to be useful in one or more cultural settings. Gardner is sensitive to the special abilities that different cultures value most highly. Assessment procedures and curriculum models have been developed around these special abilities or intelligences.

There are hundreds of definitions of the term “gifted and talented”. Generally speaking, they can be classified as either conservative or liberal. Conservative definitions are usually based on a single criterion, such as intelligence, and identification is based on a high IQ score. These definitions usually limit giftedness and talent to a small percentage of the school population (for example, 1 to 3 percent).

Liberal definitions, on the other hand, are based on a broad range of criteria. They adopt an inclusive approach that accepts a fairly high percentage (for example, 10 to 15 percent) of the school population as having special abilities. Contemporary definitions tend to avoid stating any specific percentage of the school population as being gifted or talented because schools differ so much in their interpretation of variables associated with the concept.

Some definitions accept *potential* performance as part of their criteria, whereas others focus on *demonstrated* performance. Whichever way you take it, the key issue for teachers is the need to offer challenging learning experiences so that potential can be realised.

Several definitions view *behaviours* as central to the concept. Here, it is the characteristics and behaviours of people that illustrate the giftedness and talent, for example, “*Gifted is, as gifted does*” (Hill, 1977).

Some definitions accept *potential* performance as part of their criteria, whereas others focus on *demonstrated* performance. Whichever way you take it, the key issue for teachers is the need to offer challenging learning experiences so that potential can be realised.

Some important definitions have affected attitudes to giftedness and talent over the last three decades. Some of these are:

The Marland Report (1972)

This report was presented to the United States Office of Education and had a significant impact on gifted education. It contained the first truly multicategory definition.

Renzulli (1978)

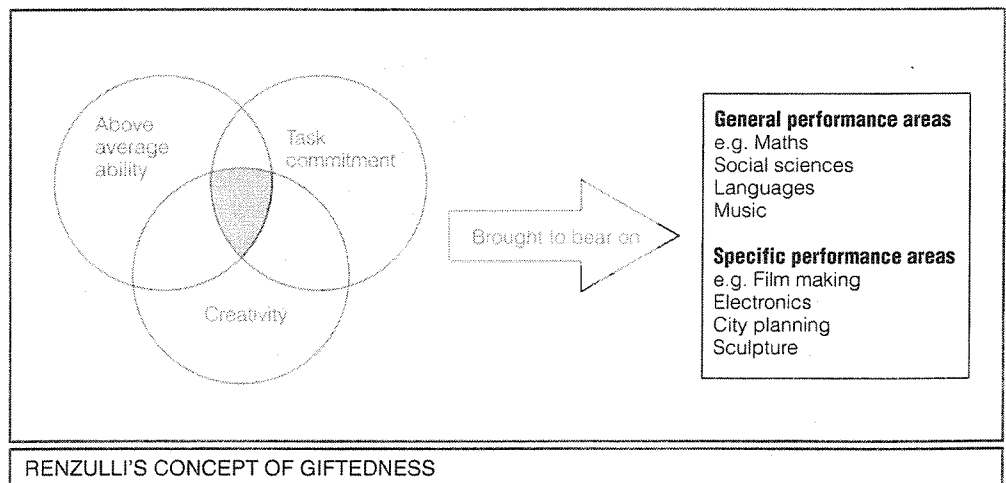
Renzulli developed a definition of giftedness based on the interaction between three basic clusters of human traits:

- above average ability
- a high level of task commitment
- a high level of creativity.

Renzulli and Reis (1985) claim that gifted and talented children “are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance” (page 28).

Furthermore, they emphasise that such children “require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs” (page 28).

Renzulli’s concept of giftedness is represented in the diagram below:



The New Zealand Department of Education (1986)

In 1986, the New Zealand Department of Education published a draft policy statement for children with special abilities, which was very similar to the Marland Report. It suggested that teachers examine a wide range of areas, including:

- specific academic, technical, or mechanical aptitude and achievement;
- creative, productive, or intuitive thinking;
- cultural arts: verbal, visual, performing;
- general intelligence;

- psychomotor skills;
- cultural traditions, values, and ethics;
- social skills and leadership;
- aesthetics.

The Javits Gifted and Talented Act (1988) and the United States Office of Educational Research and Improvement Report on National Excellence and Developing Talent (1993)

The Javits Act, in the United States, defined gifted and talented students as those who give evidence of high-performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic fields and who require programmes not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities.

While there is little new here, Javits began to push for giftedness and talent as a “natural resource vital to the nation’s future” that is, for the concept of national talent. This trend was taken up more vigorously by a Javits advisory panel and by the US Office of Educational Research and Improvement, which produced a report entitled *National Excellence and Developing Talent* (1993). The report dropped the term “gifted” in favour of “exceptional talent”. It emphasised the need to identify talent in students across all cultural groups and socioeconomic strata and in all areas of human endeavour. It also stated that supplying rich and varied learning experiences is a productive way of encouraging talent development.

National Excellence into Practice: Suggestions to Schools

1. Seek variety in the range of abilities of talented students.
2. Enable equality of opportunity and access to provisions free from cultural and other biases.
3. Identify potential as well as demonstrated achievement.
4. Use a variety of assessment procedures for identifying students with exceptional talents.
5. Assess the motivation of learners so as to take account of the drive and passion which plays a key role in accomplishments.

(United States Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993)

The Differentiation of Giftedness and Talent

Often the terms “gifted” and “talented” are joined together as “gifted and talented”. Sometimes the term “G/T” is used to express this single-concept approach. Where the term is differentiated, giftedness is usually associated with high intelligence or aptitude, whereas talent is usually related to a high level of performance in such areas as music, art, craft, dance, or sport.

Gagné (1996) has argued consistently, however, for differentiating the two terms by claiming that giftedness relates more to aptitude domains (intellectual, creative, socioaffective, perceptual/motor) while talent is associated more with outstanding achievements in a variety of fields of human endeavour (academic, technical, artistic, interpersonal, and athletic fields).



Gagné claims that catalysts such as motivation, personality traits, or education mediate the transition from giftedness to talent. Catalysts make it happen. Gagné claims that there are two broad groups of catalysts. The first group are *intrapersonal*, such as physical (health) and psychological (motivation, volition, personality). The second group are *environmental* catalysts such as surroundings (physical, social), people (parents, teachers, peers, mentors), undertakings (activities, courses, programmes), and events (encounters, awards, accidents).

Gagné links talent to excellence and outstanding performance. Talent is reserved for a minority of individuals from a larger pool of competent people.

Summary: Who are the Gifted and Talented?

- There has been a trend away from defining the gifted and talented in terms of a single category (for example, high IQ) towards a multicategory approach, which acknowledges a diverse range of special abilities.
- Multicultural values, which reflect a range of attitudes to abilities and qualities, form an important component of any concept of giftedness and talent. Identification procedures and programme content should equally incorporate multicultural perspectives.
- Social, emotional, and motivational factors are acknowledged as important aspects of giftedness and talent.
- Behavioural characteristics such as advanced reading and language skills, early abstract thinking, and exceptional levels of knowledge, curiosity, and motivation are helpful in identifying gifted and talented students.
- It is important to recognise potential as well as demonstrated performance. Educators should offer rich and challenging experiences to help realise potential.