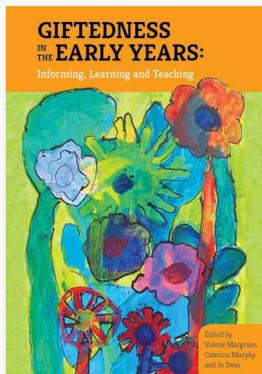


Characteristics of Giftedness in Young Children

Early years education with gifted children - Quality practices series



Caterina Murphy, Sue Breen & Valerie Margrain

This brochure connects to chapter 2 of Margrain, V., Murphy, C., & Dean, J. (2015).

Giftedness in the early years: Informing, learning & teaching. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.



Curriculum Connections

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996): Activities will be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate and will enable children with special needs to be actively engaged in learning. (p. 11)

Te Whāriki is designed to be inclusive and appropriate for all children and anticipates that special needs will be met as children learn together in all kinds of early childhood education settings. (p. 11)

The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007):

“... evidence tells us that students learn best when teachers:

- create a supportive learning environment
- encourage reflective thought and action
- enhance the relevance of new learning
- facilitate shared learning
- make connections to prior learning and experience
- provide sufficient opportunities to learn
- inquire into the teaching–learning relationship. (p. 34)

References:

Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.

A gifted child often:

- Achieves milestones much earlier
- Has a heightened sensitivity
- Has a good sense of humour
- Has a high degree of creativity
- Has a high degree of energy
- Has a long attention span
- Has a preference for older friends or adults
- Has a sense of justice and moral sensitivity
- Has a variety of interests
- Has a vivid imagination
- Has above average ability with numbers
- Has above average language development
- Has an advanced vocabulary
- Has an excellent memory
- Has apparent maturity in judgement Has keen powers of observation
- Has good problem solving and reasoning abilities
- Has leadership qualities
- Has non-conformist behaviour
- Has unusual curiosity
- Has unusual emotional depth and intensity
- Is a rapid learner
- Is able to master more complex jigsaw puzzles
- Is an early and avid reader
- Is persistent
- Is very alert
- Is very curious
- Is very observant
- Shows perfectionism traits

Characteristics of Giftedness in the Early Years

- Needs little sleep
- Began to talk very early, or was very late in talking but then learned fast
- Has a large vocabulary; uses unusual or “big” words
- Talks very fluently, uses language easily and correctly
- Generally reached physical milestones earlier than most
- Demands attention constantly, is persistent
- Is intensely curious, is always asking “why?”; really wants to know the answer
- Is very observant of detail
- Has an excellent memory
- Is very independent; insists of doing things for him/herself
- Loves being read to; follows story closely
- Is beginning to read/is reading/has asked to be taught to read
- Is quickly bored with simple or repetitive games and toys
- Shows impatience with tasks that seem meaningless
- Can concentrate for long periods of time when interested
- Creates make-believe playmates, invents games, makes up lots of stories (often complicated)
- Can not only count, but is also beginning to grasp maths concepts
- Arranges toys and other items, putting the same kinds of things together
- Has a highly developed, quite sophisticated sense of humour
- Learns easily – only needs to be told things once or twice

- Is very sensitive, distressed by hurts experienced by other people or creatures
- Is generally the leader in any group of children
- Seems to prefer the company of older children or adults
- Doesn't seem to fit in with other children
- Can be impatient with others who don't think as fast or do things as well as s/he does
- Often seems frustrated when ideas outreach ability to perform

(lists provided with permission by the New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education)

Discuss with family and colleagues which characteristics you have seen in young children.

Note that gifted children do not display all characteristics, and differences can occur between different settings.

Case study

(adapted from Margrain, 2014).

Emily, aged 4 years and 2 months, is an early reader, a voracious talker, a creative dancer and artist. She has a prodigious memory and intense imagination. When Emily role plays being a butterfly, a ballerina, a trapeze artist or a bird she can sustain the role play for days. When Emily recounts her weekends to her caregiver Lizzie, she uses complex vocabulary, not only sharing what she did with her family, but also what was highlighted in the newspaper, what she read, and what concerns she has for her community. Lizzie has observed many examples of exceptional ability. One was when Lizzie took a packet of cereal out of the cupboard and read the ingredient list, at age 3 years, 8 months.

Margrain, V. (2014). Working with gifted and talented children in family daycare: Lizzie's story. *Jigsaw* 72, 23-25.

Iti noa ana, he pito mata.

“With care, a small kumara will produce a harvest.”

Acknowledgements:



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