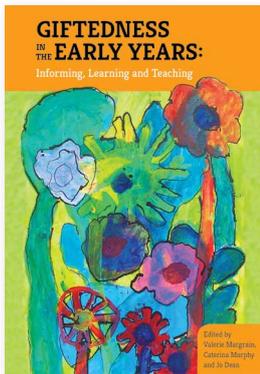


Myths, Misconceptions and Responses: Giftedness in the Early Years

Early years education with gifted children - Quality practices series



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This brochure connects to chapter 6 of Margrain, V., Murphy, C., & Dean, J. (2015). *Giftedness in the early years: Informing, learning & teaching*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.



Curriculum Connections

“Young children need ...

- adults who can encourage sustained conversations, queries, and complex thinking, including concepts of fairness, difference and similarity ...
- challenging opportunities which keep pace with their physical co-ordination and development” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 26).

“The curriculum supports and empowers all students to learn and achieve personal excellence, regardless of their individual circumstances ... The curriculum is non-sexist, non-racist, and non-discriminatory; it ensures that students’ identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 9).

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.

Case study One: Brenda, 3 years old

Brenda loves reading and drawing. She attends an education and care centre five days a week. She spends most of her time at the book corner and the drawing/collage area.

The teachers have strongly encouraged Brenda to go outside to play with the climbing equipment and swings. A teacher told Brenda’s mum that they have been trying to take Brenda outside as much as they can, because they are concerned that she does not often choose to play outside. They worry that Brenda spends hours on reading and drawing because she is already very good with these areas and they think she needs to work on other areas of learning, they think it would balance Brenda’s development by focusing on her physical (motor) skills and social skills through playing with other children outside.

The misconception here is the belief that is not worthwhile for Brenda to spend time in areas of strength and interest, or that there are not further things for her to learn. Most gifted children are exceptional in some but not all areas of learning; learning is asynchronous.

It does not make sense that any child, gifted or not would benefit from being taken away from activities in which they feel competent and capable, and this equally does not make sense for a child who is gifted. Children have unique patterns of interest and there is no single approach for all gifted children. Families, too, are diverse. The key thing is for teachers to take the time to know their learners, whānau and communities well.

Myth and Response Statements

Use the table below for professional discussion/ reflection. Decide the extent to which you agree/ disagree with the statements by adding a rating to the # columns on either side. Use a 0-3 scale: **0 = Totally disagree, 1= mostly disagree, 2= mostly agree, 3 = Totally agree.** Compare and discuss.

| # | Gifted in the Early Years Myths | Gifted in the Early Years Responses | # |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Teachers know "it all" | Knowledge is negotiated and information is being updated all the time | |
| | Pre-schoolers and New Entrants are too young to be gifted | Giftedness is evident in early childhood and all teachers should expect to work with gifted children | |
| | Teacher get adequate training | Teachers deserve to receive PD, support and resources ... but do not always receive it | |
| | Very bright children don't need to be taught, they know everything already | Gifted children may know more than their peers but do not know everything. Learning is ongoing. | |
| | Parents who think their children are gifted usually aren't right | Parents are far more effective than teachers at correctly identifying giftedness. | |
| | Parents who think their children are gifted aren't usually right | Parents are far more effective than teachers at correctly identifying giftedness | |
| | Every parent wants their child to be gifted. | Parents are proud of their child and they want their child to do well. | |
| | Every child is gifted | Every child is a gift, but not every child is gifted. | |
| | Gifted children have social problems and can't make friends | Gifted children often form strong relationships with adults and older children. | |
| | Gifted children's needs can be met by giving them more challenging resources | Responding to gifted children requires engagement as well as resources | |
| | Gifted children are difficult and challenging to teach | Gifted children are no more difficult or easier to teach than others. | |
| | The parents of gifted children are usually challenging and demanding | Requesting appropriate education should not be seen as demanding. Parents are child advocates. | |
| | Teachers know how to respond to young children's strengths and interests | Continued professional learning is needed to understand giftedness and ongoing research | |
| | Children in junior primary can't be accelerated | There are many valid ways of appropriately accelerating children at any age | |
| | Gifted children have to cover the basis in case they miss something important | "The basis" should be part of complex conceptual thinking not the focus of the learning | |
| | Giftedness only relates to academic success | Giftedness manifests across many areas, including physical, spiritual, cultural, the arts & interpersonal | |
| | Young children should be playing and having fun, not "hot housed" | If learning is child-led rather than adult-led then it is not "hot housed". | |

Iti noa ana, he pito mata.

"With care, a small kumara will produce a harvest."

Acknowledgements:



giftEDnz early years special
interest group
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