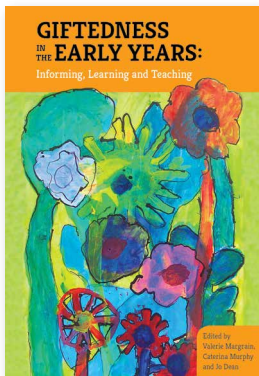


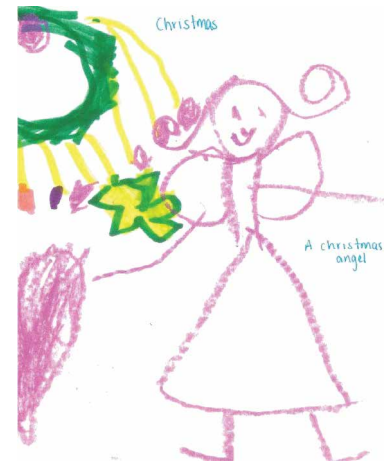
# Parent-Teacher Communication: Supporting giftedness in the early years

*Early years education with gifted children - Quality practices series*



**Valerie Margrain, Brenda Thorington  
& Monica Cameron**

This brochure connects to chapter 9 of Margrain, V., Murphy, C., & Dean, J. (2015). *Giftedness in the early years: Informing, learning & teaching*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.



## **Curriculum Connections**

“Links between home and early childhood education programmes are important. The environment, routines, people, and happenings within and around a home provide opportunities for the spontaneous learning which should be a feature of all early childhood learning contexts” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 180).

“Every decision relating to curriculum and every interaction that takes place in a school reflects the values of the individuals involved and the collective values of the institution ...

by holding these values and acting on them that we are able to live together and thrive” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 10).

“The curriculum has meaning for students, connect with their wider lives, and engages the support of their families, whānau, and communities” (Ministry of Education, 1996, 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**

David's mum was worried about her sons performance and wellbeing at school. She spoke with his classroom teacher after school who said she had also noticed this. They discussed and compared how he was at home and at school, and asked David how he felt about his schoolwork and friends. As a result of the conversation mum decided to have him assessed by a psychologist, the results indicated that he was a twice exceptional gifted learner. Mum shared the report with the teacher and a meeting was arranged with David, his mum, the GATE teacher, the classroom teacher, the special needs facilitator and a SPELD tutor. The meeting encouraged an open forum for all involved including David himself. Strategies were developed including an Individual Education Plan, Inclusion in the school GATE programme and in school SPELD sessions. Everyone had a copy of the psychologists report which was explored and any recommendations included. The teachers discussed how to differentiate for his needs in their planning. A meeting date was set to follow up on the changes and check on progress in case any adjustments were needed. The relationship between this team was collaborative with a common understanding and vision. The GATE teacher included David in the mentor programme that gives student voice through learning stories and collects data tracking any plateau effects or slipping of grade levels. As a result of this David felt supported and understood by the community of people involved with his learning and has gained a greater understanding of his himself enabling him to develop healthy friendships productive learning experiences.

**Teacher communication strategies valued by parents (Margrain, 2003):**

Category	Strategy
Informal interpersonal	Informal comments, email, personal contact, questions
	Parent involvement in school/class/centre
	Teacher actively approachable
	Listening, acknowledgment and reassurance
Formal Interpersonal	Formal parent-teacher interviews
	Meetings regarding an 'issue' – 'awesome' or 'intense' meetings
	Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Education Plan (EP)
	Parent education evenings
Written communication	Written reports
	Portfolios/work samples
	General newsletter
	Certificates
	Comments notebook
	Homework
Systems-level communication	Open-door policy – parents able to observe
	Support for one-day school for gifted students
	Principal/manager supportive
	Websites
	Advising parents of child's reading age/level, test results/grades

These approaches are not exclusive to gifted education.

**Communication purposes vary, but include a desire to:**

- share information
- learn from one another
- mutually agree on goals and strategies
- advocate
- give feedback

Good communication builds upon understanding and a genuine want to listen and share.

**Examples of valued information-sharing:**

- multiple perspectives on and definitions of giftedness;
- profiles of the community of educators and learners;
- access to research and literature on giftedness;
- newsletters on events and professional development;
- identification procedures and tools;
- contact information for others such as psychologists or support groups;
- forums for discussions and support;
- celebrations of children's work.

However, in Margrain's study of transition to school of early readers, 32% of respondents were not able to state any effective communication strategies experienced during the transition process. Despite the overwhelming sense of frustration reported by most parents, two thirds of parents were able to report at least one effective communication strategy (Margrain, 2003).

**Reference**

Margrain, V. (2003). Already reading in early childhood: Issues of identification, accommodation and collaboration. *Occasional Paper Number 15*. Wellington, New Zealand: Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.

**Iti noa ana, he pito mata.**

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

Acknowledgements:



giftEDnz early years special interest group  
www.giftednz.org.nz



**NZCER PRESS**

