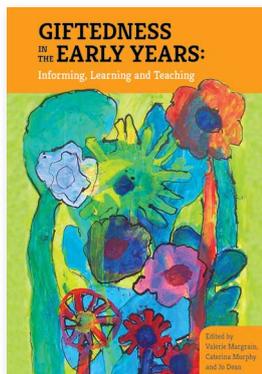


# Play patterns of young children who are gifted

Early years education with gifted children - Quality practices series



Caterina Murphy & Valerie Margrain

This brochure connects to chapters 4 & 5 of Margrain, V., Murphy, C., & Dean, J. (2015). *Giftedness in the early years: Informing, learning & teaching*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.



## Curriculum Connections

"Children experience and environment where: their play is valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play is recognised" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 82).

"Children develop: ... the confidence to choose and experiment with materials, to play around with ideas, and to explore actively with all the senses" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 88).

"Students will be encouraged to value:

- Excellence, by aiming high and by persevering in the face of difficulties;
- Innovation, inquiry, and curiosity, by thinking critically, creatively, and reflectively;
- Diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages, and heritages;
- equity, through fairness and social justice ... and to respect themselves, others, and human rights" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 10).

## 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 Studies (Margrain, 2005; Murphy, 2005)

**Jenny, 3 years old** (Early childhood & home)

Jenny loves playing with language. When she meets people she often makes up a rhyming poem about their name. She uses rich, complex and descriptive vocabulary.

**MJ, 4 years old** (early childhood)

MJ is sitting alone on a piece of carpet outside. He is making loud noises and waving his arms in the air. Cat [teacher]: "What you are doing looks exciting!" MJ: "I'm flying to the moon on my flying carpet."

**Henry, 5 years old** (inquiry learning at school)

Henry's new entrant class were learning about fish. While the children were painting a mural of life under the sea, Henry played with conceptual ideas. He imagined how Antarctic cod might live under the ice, and wondered if they might evolve to have fur, which would keep them warm.

## References:

Margrain, V. (2005). *Precocious readers: Case studies of spontaneous learning, self-regulation and social support in the early years*. Unpublished PhD thesis: Victoria University of Wellington.

Murphy, C. L. (2005). Play patterns and behaviours of young children who are gifted in an early childhood setting. Unpublished MEd thesis: Massey University.

## **What is play?** (Murphy, 2002)

Play involves discovery, exploration, creativity, experimentation, and critical thinking. Play is:

- Symbolic, includes make-believe
- Meaningful, makes connections
- Active
- Pleasurable
- Voluntary
- Rule-governed
- Episodic (beginning, middle and end)

Outcomes of play:

- Abstract thought
- Cognitive development
- Social interaction
- Construction of new knowledge
- Intersubjectivity – meeting minds
- Empowerment
- Strengths and interests

Play connections in school settings:

Discovery time, developmental, choosing time, inquiry learning, key competencies, problem-solving.

Characteristics of giftedness evident during play

- Advanced language and knowledge
- Perfectionism/frustration
- Highly imaginative, abstract, conceptual thinking
- Heightened interpersonal awareness
- Ambidexterity
- Advanced sense of humour
- Boredom
- Love of learning
- Curiosity
- Teacher/adult preference
- Repelling and ignoring peers
- Dominating and leading peers
- Self-perception as teacher's peer and helper

Play preferences

- Open-ended play
- Solitary play
- Pretend play
- Undisrupted play
- Rules-oriented play

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

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

## **Reflective questions**

1. What specific aspects come to mind, when you think of the play you have observed this child engaging in?
2. Have you observed this child utilising resources in ways that differ from their peers?
3. Have you observed this child initiating or repelling adults during their play?
4. Have you observed this child initiating or repelling peers during their play?
5. Are requests for help during play, similar to that of their peers or does this child demonstrate a need for more or less assistance?
6. When you observe this child playing in a specific learning area e.g. dramatic/fantasy play, do you find the games created by him or her to be more imaginative, less imaginative or similar to their peers?
7. Have you observed this child engaged in play for longer periods than their peers, despite distractions, and if so, what do you think determines this?
8. Which areas of play/aspects of learning appear to be of most interest to this child?
9. Have you found that questions generated from play and during play are different to their peers? (If yes, then how?)
10. Have you observed any direct links between the types of learning experiences this child chooses to engage in and the types of thinking that these learning experiences generate?
11. In your experience, what types of play experiences does this child most often engage in?
12. Do you think this child chooses these experiences for particular reasons? For example, the people participating with them, the challenge of resources, etc.
13. What sort of games do you see this child generating?
14. Why do you think he/she engages in these experiences more so than others?

Acknowledgements:



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