Transitioning from ECE to School for Gifted Young Learners

The Importance of Working Together Collaboratively – children & families & teachers ECE and Primary & outside agencies...

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Overview

• Definition of Giftedness
• Scales and Characteristics
• The Importance of Recognition – a lifetime of giftedness
• Social and Emotional Issues
• Good Pedagogical Documentation as base for Assessment
• Assessment in ECE for documenting, revealing progress and learning, planning AND supporting transition to School
• Transition to School
• Working together (ECE teachers and New Entrants teachers as powerful Transition Agents)
• Resources for Teachers, Parents & Children
A gifted child is one who performs or has the ability to perform at a level significantly beyond his or her chronologically aged peers and whose unique abilities and characteristics require special provisions and social and emotional support from the family, community and educational context. (Cathie Harrison, 1998; 2005)

**Giftedness** designates the possession and use of outstanding natural abilities, called aptitudes, in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers.

**Talent** designates the outstanding mastery of systematically developed abilities, called competencies (knowledge and skills), in at least one field of human activity to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers who are or have been active in that field. (Francoys Gagné, 2009)
Characteristics of Giftedness Scale

- reasons well (good thinker)
- learns rapidly
- extensive vocabulary
- excellent memory
- long attention span (if interested)
- sensitive (feelings hurt easily)
- shows compassion
- perfectionist
- intense
- morally sensitive
- strong curiosity
- perseverant in areas of interest
- prefers older companions or adults
- wide range of interests
- great sense of humour
- early or avid reader
- keen observer
- vivid imagination
- highly creative
- tends to question authority
- introvert
- facility with numbers
- good at jigsaw puzzles
- concerned with justice, fairness
- shows compassion
- early language development
- enjoyment and speed of problem solving
- early use of symbol systems
- capacity for symbolic thought
- more complex play patterns
- personal maturity
- heightened concentration
- early interest in time (clocks, etc.)
- recognition of letters before age 2
- early ability to count
- early ability to put 20 piece puzzle together by age 3
- ability to sight read / early reader by age

(Silverman, 2013)
Giftedness can be Hidden

- Challenging behaviour
- Overexcitabilities (intense experiencing, feeling)
- Asynchronous (uneven) development
- Culture
- Temperament (introversion, etc...), resilience
- Language barrier
- Learning difficulty (dyslexia, dyspraxia, slow output processing, etc...)
- Disability (twice-exceptional)
- Learning style etc, etc ...
- Other issues like anxieties, selective mutism, SPD, etc...

... making it more difficult for teaching staff to notice, recognise and respond.
5 areas of overexcitability (Dabrowski)

- **Psychomotor** - surplus of energy, movement, restlessness, compulsive chattering, can’t sit still, need to move in order to think, moving hands and feet, impulsive actions, nervous habits (nail biting, etc..), acting out

- **Sensual** - enhanced sensory and aesthetic pleasure, seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing, delight in sounds of words, music, form, colour, strong dislike of smells and food, texture, dislike of feel of clothing, -labels, etc...

- **Intellectual** - intensified activity of the mind, curiosity, concentration, avid reading, detailed visual recall, perfectionism, etc...

- **Imaginational** - free play of imagination, facility for invention and fantasy, poetic, dramatic, magical thinking, imaginary worlds, imaginary friends, etc..

- **Emotional** - feelings and emotions intensified, extremes of emotions, identification and awareness of others feelings, strong emotional ties and attachments to persons, places, things, difficulty adjusting to new environments, loneliness, etc..

(Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Piechowski, 2006; 2014)

For ECE teachers and Parents of gifted children to consider more school visits and commencing those visits earlier to foster relationships with school teacher and counteract stress, possible anxieties, etc....
Identifying gifted and talented young children

Why?

• to nurture their **Well-being**, to ensure they **belong**, to ensure opportunities for learning are equitable (and inclusive) and **contributions** are valued, to ensure children's **languages and symbols** of their own and other cultures are promoted and protected, to let children learn through active **exploration** of the environment.

• to safeguard children’s rights to personal dignity, and equitable opportunities for participation....to acknowledge that there is considerable variation between individual children as well as different cultural perspectives.....

• to reveal individual abilities, skills and interests in order to nurture and further develop them

• to enable gifted and talented children to find out and follow their passions ... **throughout their school lives and beyond!**

• to provide an educational experience that strives towards excellence

• to avoid underachievement  

(MoE, 1996; 2012; 2013)

Where?

- Early childhood settings, Primary school, Secondary school; through nomination by parents, teachers, peers and self; through formal tests, psychological assessments, assessments (narratives, etc...)

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**Case study: The Inventor – academic underachievement for 10 years of school life**

**Case study: Liam’s transition from ECE to school –academic underachievement first 4 years of school**
➢ The impact of educational environments on gifted children’s wellbeing and talent development cannot be underestimated

➢ Collaborative relationships between teachers and parents (including students) are vital

➢ Members of all three education sectors need to work together to ensure a better transition for gifted students

➢ A shared understanding about the various learning environments by all involved for the benefit of all their children/students – including their gifted students

➢ Collaborative partnerships in gifted Education are essential - let’s talk and work together
Assessment in ECE for documenting, revealing progress and learning, planning AND supporting transition to School.

Assessment is used by teachers to

- find out about children’s interests,
- what children already know,
- their progress of learning,
- what new learning opportunities might be appropriate,
- and where additional support might be required.

• Teachers use knowledge gained from assessment to document learning and plan, facilitate and extend children’s learning based on individual and shared interests.

Assessment should also support transition from home, to school and other learning environments through encouraging parents to share portfolios with school teachers and/or provide access to their children’s (e-)portfolio during transition!
What goes into a portfolio?

- Learning stories (with added child’s, parent’s voices)
- Individual goals and parent aspirations
- Anecdotes
- Other observation (running records, etc.....)
- Photos (with and without comments)
- Photos of artwork
- Parent’s and family’s contributions (anecdotes, photos, learning stories)
- Snap shots of learning
- Meaningful achievements outside kindergarten (awards, etc....)
- Parent’s notes on child’s interests
- Individual Education Plans
- Video clips

....to reveal previous learning, skills, abilities and progress of learning and gradually developing school readiness.....
Narrative Assessment Benefits

- Not limited to a small range of academic areas – supports multi-categorical definition of giftedness (not just academic!!)
- Documents what is “not easily assessable”
- Links learning to children’s individual goals and curricula (ECE, School)
- Reveals progress of learning through linking learning stories and other pedagogical documentation in portfolio (within the stories themselves & with the use of hyper links – eportfolios)
- Consistent approach for all children
- Focuses on strengths & competencies
- Includes child/teacher/family voice
- Acknowledges context and culture
- Can reveal school readiness (which also includes the readiness of families)
- Should be used as supportive tool for transitions (to school and other learning environments)

(Margrain, 2011; McLachlan, et al., 2013)
“School readiness implies that……
……...students have developed or developing a sense of self, autonomy and a desire to
explore, and the language and behaviours needed for social and emotional expression
and self-regulation.” (Webster-Stratton, 2012)

……including persistence with learning something new, focused activity, cooperation, emotion
regulation and patience.

- Being able to follow teacher’s directions
- Listening to teachers and peers
- Independence while working
- Exploring and trying out ideas
- Being curious about how things work
- Cooperating with other students on projects
- Early literacy & numeracy (letter, number, shape, colour knowledge)
- Problem-solving, trying again

- Thinking
- Using language, symbols and text
- Managing self
- Relating to others
- Participating and contributing

Key competencies in The New Zealand
School Curriculum (2007)

(Webster-Stratton, 2012)
Assessment (pedagogical documentation in portfolios; e-portfolios)

- Wellbeing (Trust and Playfulness – Being involved)
- Belonging (Courage and Curiosity – Taking an interest)
- Contribution (Responsibility – taking responsibility)
- Communication (Confidence – Expressing a point of view/feeling)
- Exploration (Perseverance – Persisting with difficulty, challenge and uncertainty)
- Thinking
  - Using language, symbols and text
  - Managing self
  - Relating to others
  - Participating and contributing

The New Zealand (School) Curriculum 2007

And others like Tātaiako, Philosophy etc...

Carr & Lee, 2012; MoE, 2007
Example - How might that look in e-portfolios?

Key competencies of the New Zealand School Curriculum are defined as follows....

“More complex than skills, the competencies draw also on knowledge, attitudes, and values in ways that lead to action. They are not separate or standalone. They are the key to learning in every learning area...” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.12)
"Te Whariki: He Whariki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa, the curriculum for early childhood education, provides children with a foundation for ongoing learning. It is based on four principles: Empowerment, Holistic Development, Family and Community, and Relationships...

Together, they (the curriculum strands) provide a foundation for lifelong learning. These strands correspond to the key competencies identified in this document...

"..The transition from early childhood education to school is supported when the school:
• fosters a child’s relationships with teachers and other children and affirms their identity;
• builds on the learning experiences that the child brings with them;
• considers the child’s whole experience of school;
• is welcoming of family and whānau.
This new stage in children’s learning builds upon and makes connections with early childhood learning and experiences. Teaching and learning programmes are developed through a wide range of experiences across all learning areas, with a focus on literacy and numeracy along with the development of values and key competencies....."
According to Peters (2010) key transition strategies include:

- Connecting with funds and knowledge
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Diverse assessment practice
- Making links between children’s learning in ECE and School
- Fostering positive children’s relationship and friendships
- Considering children’s whole experience of school
- Providing rich, open-ended opportunities for play & learning
- Understanding the impact of rules and the way these can support belonging, but can also constrain children’s behaviour and create anxiety
- Providing information and familiarisation activities for children and families
- Learning about children and their families
- Developing home-school partnerships
- Building on funds of knowledge from early childhood education and home.

(Cameron & Margrain, 2015; Peters, 2010)
Where do we find resources, information....

- **Literature like...**
  and the literature review: Transition from ece to school: Report to the Ministry of Education (Peters, 2010)
  or from [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/98894/Chapter_6](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/98894/Chapter_6) (full pdf download to the right on page)

- **Websites like ...**

- **Organisations like...**
  New Zealand Center for Gifted Education NZCGE [http://nzcge.co.nz/](http://nzcge.co.nz/)

- **Local organisations and Interest groups...**
  Taranaki Explorers  [https://www.facebook.com/taranakiexplorers/](https://www.facebook.com/taranakiexplorers/)
  Taranaki gifted preschooler coffee group (for gifted preschoolers & families)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH ACHIEVER</th>
<th>A GIFTED LEARNER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remembers the answers</td>
<td>Poses unforeseen questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is attentive</td>
<td>Is selectively mentally engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generates advanced ideas</td>
<td>Generates complex, abstract ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works hard to achieve</td>
<td>Knows without working hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answers the questions in detail</td>
<td>Ponders with depth and multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performs at the top of the group</td>
<td>Is beyond the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs 6-8 repetitions to master</td>
<td>Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys the company of age peers</td>
<td>Prefers the company of intellectual peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands complex, abstract humor</td>
<td>Creates complex, abstract humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorbs information</td>
<td>Manipulates information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is pleased with own learning</td>
<td>Is self-critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets A’s</td>
<td>May not be motivated by grades</td>
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-adapted from *Differentiation: Simplified, Realistic, and Effective* by Bertie Kingore, 2004
References


Daniels & M. Piechowski (Eds), Living with Intensity. (pp. 33 -56). USA, Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.


Piechowski M. (2006;2014). “Mellow out” they say. If I only could. Intensities and sensitivities of the young and bright. USA, Wisconsin: Yunasa Books
