

# The Forgotten Children

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## Abstract

This article provides a description of the author's learning journey as she makes the commitment to provide for gifted children at the early childhood education service in which she works. The author examines research which highlights the reasons for identifying young gifted children. She includes issues that teachers may be experiencing which impact on the identification of gifted young children not being included in daily practice. Possible solutions are given as suggestions to overcome barriers that reduce the rate of formal identification occurring in early childhood education services. The author acknowledges that she is in the early stages of developing gifted education in the service for which she works. She encourages teachers to take the same steps as she has which is to initiate strategies to begin the identification process with the goal to provide appropriate learning opportunities for gifted children in their early childhood education services.

## Introduction

Four year old Tommy consistently produces interesting objects made from junk. He spends most of his time in this learning area. Maggie, a three year old girl, looks at the kindergarten's garden and is able to discriminate between weeds and flowers. She has knowledge of plants that exceeds her teachers' knowledge. Four year old Beth intricately designs patterns out of sparkly collage every day. Her attention is on detail and perfect execution. Jessica, a four year old girl, focuses on the well being of others, often stopping her involvement in an activity to help a peer or a teacher. Who are these children? They appear to be different from most of their peers but at the same time tend to blend into the busy early learning environment.

These are potentially gifted children with whom I work in a kindergarten. I shudder to think that their potential almost went unnoticed because of lack of teacher knowledge in gifted education at our kindergarten. I refer to gifted children as "the forgotten children" because in the fourteen years of teaching in different early childhood settings I had not, until recently, experienced the practice of providing gifted education. This is my story of how I have initiated changes in the kindergarten by developing as a teacher to notice, appreciate and provide for children who have the potential to be gifted.

The opportunity arose for me to study a university paper on gifted education. As I reflected on the knowledge that I gained from my studies, I began to consider the reasons for teachers not providing for gifted children. It was obvious that these children were not being identified as having special needs resulting in gifted programmes not being implemented.

I investigated other teachers' views, opinions and knowledge of gifted education by engaging in many informal discussions with local early childhood professionals. I soon discovered that identifying gifted children is generally not being carried out in most early childhood education services. I began to uncover the concerns and the feelings of teachers through these discussions. Much of what was revealed was what I expected. Teachers' comments included their lack of

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knowledge, uncertainty, and feelings of inadequacy. I felt the same way before I started my gifted education journey.

As a teacher, I understand the reasons behind gifted children being “forgotten.” My aim is to offer practical solutions to some of the issues that result in these children not being identified in early childhood settings. I would like to point out that my current working place is a private kindergarten and this is the learning environment in which I have worked during my gifted education journey. However, I have had teaching experiences in the other early childhood education services which have contributed to my reflections and growth as a teacher of gifted children.

Some of the issues from teachers’ comments and my personal experiences will be addressed as I recount my journey in gifted education. I appreciate that the comments from informal discussions included in this article are a small representative of teachers from early childhood settings in my area. However, I suspect that there are many teachers across New Zealand who share similar apprehensions and concerns. I believe there are many issues to address and overcome before it becomes common practice to identify gifted children in all services.

## **Is it Necessary for Teachers to Consider Gifted Education in the Early Years?**

I have chosen to refer to the document Te Whāriki: Early Childhood Curriculum as this is the document used by teachers in their practice. Although Te Whāriki does not specifically mention children who are gifted, it does state that teachers should provide for children who require “resources alternative or additional to those usually provided within an early childhood education setting” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p 11). As I reflected on this I began to think of the children with special needs who have been identified while attending our kindergarten during the last few years. They were children with Autism, Down Syndrome and Muscular Dystrophy but never gifted children.

Informal discussions with teachers and my own experiences clearly show that children with special needs who require intervention to overcome barriers such as language and behaviour difficulties, are more likely to be identified by teachers as needing additional support than those children with gifted abilities. In my experience additional support from services is also less likely to be given to gifted children unless they are twice exceptional children, that is gifted and Autistic for example. Why are gifted children not given the same priority as other children with special needs?

I believe that to make a difference to the education of young gifted children, teachers have to be informed of the identification crisis in the early childhood sector. I believe that many teachers will then take the responsibility to become more knowledgeable in gifted education. The more informed teachers become, the more children will be identified (Allen, 2006; Reece; 2006). With more children being identified, added pressure will be placed on specialist services to support these children, their families and their teachers. I can only hope that in the future, support for gifted children will be given to a greater extent than is presently being experienced.

In my experience, many centre philosophies state that individuality and differences are celebrated. While this may be true to a certain extent, I do not believe that gifted abilities are being celebrated formally to the same degree as some differences, for example cultural differences. I urge teachers to examine inclusiveness in their services, and to implement strategies such as developing gifted policies, to ensure that young gifted children are no longer “forgotten.” Gifted education should be given the same attention as special needs such as learning disabilities. This will ensure that giftedness is taken seriously and that all children with special needs are valued equally.

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## What are the Possible Outcomes of Unidentified Gifted Children?

Jacobson (1971) is cited as stating that as few as 10% of gifted children (in America) are identified in kindergarten (Clark, 2002). This is a strong enough reason to acknowledge that there is a crisis in early education if these figures remain the same today, and in our country. Judging from my informal discussions with teachers, I would expect that the identification crisis continues to be an issue. Moltzen (2004) states that it is a misconception that gifted and talented children reach their potential with or without positive and supportive education. Porter (2004) agrees by stating that it is necessary to support the learning of gifted children. She is of the opinion that despite their advanced abilities and knowledge, gifted children do not know everything and therefore as with any child, need assistance to extend their education (Porter, 2004). Yet it is obvious from informal discussions with teachers that many continue to view the misconception of gifted children not requiring support in their education. Teachers need to become more informed of the consequences of not identifying young gifted children.

Allen (2006) comments that unidentified gifted children are not likely to reach their potential and may lack incentive to learn. If this is the case then these children are unlikely to develop into “competent and confident learners,” this being part of the aspiration stated in Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996, p9).

In one of the latest publications by the Ministry of Education, *Nurturing Gifted and Talented Children*, “asynchronous development” is one of the issues discussed in relation to gifted children (2008). This term refers to the child being at various stages in intellectual, social, physical, and emotional development (Ministry of Education, 2008). Reflect on how this may impact on a child who does not have the understanding of the adults in his world. Teachers who have no knowledge of the issues in gifted education will not respond appropriately.

Also consider the social implications of a gifted child who has advanced abilities in a domain but has difficulty fitting in with her peers. This would certainly be more of a challenge for the child without identification of being gifted and without subsequent adult support. My experience with Beth was an example of this.

Beth is so intense in her work with sparkly collage that she does not interact with her peers. She does not appreciate her peers’ less complex designs and blobs of collage. She makes this very clear with her lack of interest in what they are doing as well as in her disapproving facial expressions. After assessing Beth’s abilities I realised that her intricate work was very advanced but her social skills needed support. Plans have been put into action to support some social interaction with her peers but at the same time the teachers allow plenty of time for her to satisfy her need to work on the next sparkly project alone. While the plans have achieved a certain amount of social interaction, she is usually in charge of her peers during these interactions. She is a perfectionist which results in her taking the leadership from her peers in order to satisfy her drive for perfection. Beth has difficulty taking another point of view and accepting leadership from her peers. Beth needs adult support with her social skills.

Te Whāriki states that one of the responsibilities of teachers is to meet the emotional needs of young children (Ministry of Education, 1996). Porter (1999) believes that gifted children as young as two years old know that they are different, and that they deserve an explanation for their differences to avoid issues such as low self-esteem. Children need to know that their differences are identified and celebrated. I challenge teachers to consider how successful inclusiveness is in their teaching practice without identifying and catering for these children’s different abilities and learning styles. Reflect on the feelings of gifted children whose differences are not valued in their learning communities.

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In 2002, the Ministry of Education released *The Initiatives for Gifted and Talented Learners*, a document that seems to be familiar to only a few early childhood teachers. Included in the Core Principles of this document is the statement that the early childhood sector provides “powerful catalysts for the demonstration and development of talent” (Ministry of Education, 2002). Despite this important recognition from the Ministry several years ago, it is obvious that the message is not being directed strongly enough to those who can make a difference. Teachers need to become aware that as with all children, the early years lay the foundations to later learning and development. If children are not being identified, appropriate education will not be given. Reflect on the impact of this on a young gifted child. Later on there may be behaviour issues that impact on the child’s learning. Also the child may develop into an undervalued adult who develops emotional problems such as depression. Surely early childhood teachers cannot ignore their responsibility of making a positive difference to these children with special needs? I could not ignore the responsibility but the dilemma for me was finding a starting point.

## **Making a Start**

My research into gifted education convinced me that more active participation from early childhood teachers in gifted education is essential if progress is to be made. At the start of my journey, I felt a compelling desire to ensure that gifted children were included in our education programmes at our kindergarten. However, the difficulty was deciding on the first appropriate step. Allen (2006) states that the starting point in gifted education is identifying gifted children. While identification may seem the first logical step to take, teachers with little or no experience in gifted identification will find this impossible. I believe that the starting point is teacher education.

My start was increasing my knowledge by reading and reflecting on many different views and research findings on gifted education. This helped my understanding of the meaning and depth of giftedness. By reflecting on different perceptions and models of giftedness, I was able to relate to one theory more than others. The theory is Joseph Renzulli’s Three-Ring Concept of Giftedness which includes the idea of “potential” (2003). This seemed to make sense to me when considering giftedness in very young children. I used Renzulli’s theory as the tool to persuade the teaching team, with whom I work, to join me on my journey to provide for gifted children in our kindergarten. This decision led to the teaching team believing that it is possible to identify young gifted children. I am fortunate that the teachers trusted my judgement and agreed to join forces with me to implement strategies that would make positive changes.

The next strategy was to provide some form of teacher education or professional development so that all the teachers could understand the meaning of giftedness and the indicators that may potentially be giftedness. Reece’s (2006) research includes lack of knowledge, abilities, information, and resources as some of the reasons teachers are not implementing gifted education. These reasons certainly impacted on my initial confidence to take the step to formally identify gifted children. While many teachers may prefer not to take on formal gifted education study, it is encouraging to know that many teachers would be prepared to provide for gifted children (Reece, 2006). The solution is to provide professional development within early childhood education services.

## **How Do Teachers Increase Their Knowledge in Gifted Education?**

Reece (2006) undertook research during which teachers were given professional development in gifted education. The research revealed a remarkable improvement in the identification of children as well as positive changes in attitudes and confidence in the approach to gifted education from the participating teachers (Reece, 2006). Reece (2006) researched early childhood teachers and their identification skills for gifted children. After the teachers attended workshops

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on gifted education, their abilities to identify gifted children increased. It became very obvious to me that as my knowledge increased, my skills for identification improved.

Professional development such as workshops would be advantageous but I appreciate that not all early childhood education services are able to finance this. As the gifted interest was primarily mine, I was the teacher in the team who carried out the research and initiated changes that impacted on the progress of gifted education in the kindergarten. A suggestion would be to delegate the research task to the teacher who is the most passionate about gifted education. Staff meetings are practical opportunities for the delegated teacher to share information that may serve as professional development for the other teachers.

Along my journey, as mentioned before, I discovered Renzulli's theory of the Three-Ring Conception of giftedness (2003). While I may have responded to this theory more than other theories, I strongly advise that other perceptions are studied and considered. For example, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences lists many possibilities of intelligences including linguistic, spatial and intrapersonal intelligences (Gardner, Ramos-Ford, & von Károlyi, 2003). On the other hand, Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness describes giftedness as being visible in early childhood but later developing into talent with maturity and training (Gagné, 2003). The fact that I responded more to Renzulli than to these theorists does not mean that I have disregarded the information that I gained from other theories. I encourage teachers to investigate many theories so that teacher knowledge can be based on a wide range of perspectives. Informed decisions can then be made as to which teaching approaches in gifted education are appropriate for particular early childhood education settings.

Books have been published and websites developed to assist teachers and parents with their knowledge in gifted education. All early childhood education services should have a copy of *Nurturing Gifted and Talented Children* distributed by the Ministry of Education (2008). I encourage teachers to explore this resource as it includes gifted education information, available resources for teachers and parents, and useful websites such as [www.tki.org.nz](http://www.tki.org.nz) which provide links to valuable and useful information.

Once professional development has been achieved to the level that has increased teacher confidence, it is time to take the next step. Teacher knowledge can then be used in the identification process, which is obviously essential before gifted programmes can be implemented.

## Addressing the Issue of Identification

My studies revealed many different definitions of a gifted child which may be confusing to teachers. The key is to find a definition that is relevant to the early learning environment. Harrison (2002) makes the following definition in her book *Giftedness in Early Childhood*:

A gifted child is one who performs, or has the ability to perform, at the level significantly beyond his or her chronological aged peers, and whose unique abilities and characteristics require special provisions and social and emotional support from the family, community and educational context.

Reflecting on this definition led to the next step which was to find a method or methods that would identify gifted children who fitted this definition. The method had to be appropriate for young children and practical for teachers to use in daily practice. Kearney (2000) discourages formal testing of children under the age of four years because of impacting conditions that could influence results, such as tiredness and insecure feelings in a strange environment. Formal testing was not one of the methods I considered at this point.

I considered an alternative which is more practical for early childhood teachers. Story (1991) states that behaviours in young gifted children reveal characteristics that indicate giftedness.

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These behaviours include curiosity, learning rapidly, excellent memory skills and passionate interests (Story, 1991). Margaret Carr (2001) is well known for her work on developing learning dispositions including interest, involvement and perseverance, all of which she believes contribute to the start for life-long learning. These learning dispositions are included in the goals described in the strands of Te Whāriki which are used in teacher observations (Ministry of Education, 1996).

While early childhood teachers have been observing behaviours and dispositions in learning stories as part of their assessment practice for some time, this information has not been used in the process of identifying giftedness. The dilemma I faced at the start of this assessment practice was differentiating between those behaviours and dispositions that are considered gifted indicators and those that are not. In my experience the differences observed in gifted children are that these children appear to be more intense, more complex and more consistent than that of their peers. These factors have been indicators that have alerted me to children being exceptional in their group of peers. Analysis of the behaviours and dispositions has clearly set these children apart from their peers.

Learning stories and photographs form the greater part of portfolio documentation in our kindergarten which is used for assessments. I have to admit that until recently these assessments were not used in the identification process at the kindergarten. Porter (1999) states that the use of portfolios is becoming increasingly more popular as a “curriculum based” method of assessment for gifted children. It was reassuring for me to know that the evidence for giftedness already existed in the children’s portfolios. All I had to do was assess the evidence with a different perspective.

As I revisited the portfolios of potentially gifted children, I was able to assess long term behaviours that revealed far more than I had noticed before. Te Whāriki states that assessment should be carried out over a period of time (Ministry of Education, 1996). The advantage of identifying gifted children in an early childhood setting, is that often teachers are able to assess documentation over long periods of time. On average I reflected on the portfolios of these children spanning a period of one to two and a half years. Varying combinations of indicators such as intense interests, critical thinking, long attention spans, and innovation were present in the learning stories assessed. Included in the learning stories were many “child’s voices” which revealed consistent interests as well as details of children’s advanced thinking processes as their thoughts and actions were verbalised.

Using the portfolios as narrative assessment for learning is not new at our kindergarten but this practice is new for identification purposes for the gifted. I challenge teachers to use assessment of behaviours and dispositions in their practice for gifted identification. Teachers need to acknowledge that by writing and assessing learning stories, they are actually identifying giftedness. With adequate professional development in gifted education and with experience, teachers will begin to recognise the gifted indicators in learning stories they have written.

After establishing a familiar method of identification based on narrative assessments, I noticed a positive change in the kindergarten teachers’ attitudes as they realised that they were not required to make drastic changes in their observations of gifted children. This confidence has resulted in the improvement of our provision of gifted extension programmes. Allen’s (2006) research revealed that teachers are able to respond to children’s strengths once identification had taken place. This was certainly true at the kindergarten. I strongly urge teachers to take the necessary steps of becoming informed of the many tools available to identify gifted children.

## What Tools are available for teachers to use in the Identification Process?

I have already established the success I experienced with narrative assessment when identifying young gifted children. However, teachers should be aware of other tools or methods that can be used in the identification process. Porter's recommendation to use several methods in the identification process makes sense as this provides a more complete assessment of the child (1999).

Teacher nominations have been the second most successful method at our kindergarten. I consult the other teachers for their opinions. By valuing their opinions in a collaborative approach, I believe that the teachers are more at ease when sharing their observations and opinions relating to gifted children. I have had one or two surprise suggestions of potential giftedness that have emerged through teacher discussions. This is wonderful as it is proving that teacher confidence has increased in identifying potential giftedness which is exactly what I was hoping to achieve.

A less obvious method in the early years is peer nominations. As I thought about this possibility in early childhood, I realised that it is possible to observe peer nominations. Some of Tommy's learning stories described his abilities to assist children with construction difficulties. It was clear that his peers viewed him as the expert by observing him while he was working and by asking for his help. I had to smile when on many occasions his peers would ask Tommy for advice. Even though I was working at the same table, I was overlooked as the expert. I believe that this is peer nomination in the early years.

Formal testing, as stated earlier, is not always the most successful with young children but this method should not be ruled out as impossible in certain children. Rating scales and checklists are useful as they are based on teacher and parent knowledge of the child. These are available on websites and in books such as Louise Porter's *Gifted Young Children* (1999). Another source for this is the book *Nurturing Gifted and Talented Children* (Ministry of Education, 2008).

A very important tool to use is parent nomination. Parents know their children better than anyone so one would assume that many parents of gifted children suspect that their children are gifted. The curriculum values the parent/teacher partnership for a good reason (Ministry of Education, 1996). With open parent/teacher communication, parents are more likely to come forward with their suspicions, as well as valuable information from home that will likely impact on the child's education. However, I would like to use the example of Tommy to demonstrate that not all parents are aware of their children's abilities, and are therefore less forthcoming with information that could assist with gifted identification.

Tommy's domain was only available in his last year at kindergarten after the construction area was revamped. This happened by "accident" after a decision to allocate this area of learning specifically for junk construction. Tommy immediately showed intense interest in the area and he consistently produced above average constructions. Shortly after revamping the area, a teacher discovered in a parent survey that Tommy had had access to a creative table at home for more than two years. He had already developed his skills at home but his passion was so strong that he chose to continue his "work" at kindergarten, despite having vast experience with similar equipment and resources at home. Tommy's domain was discovered by changing the learning environment but it was obvious that this discovery could have been made sooner if the "right" questions had been asked earlier. His intense passion and commitment to construction at home would have been highlighted and his individual plan at kindergarten would have been implemented earlier.

This example emphasises the value of parent consultation in all children's education. Since my experience with Tommy, I have implemented one strategy that has improved parent

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consultation. I include a question under the heading “parent/whānau voice” which is included at the end of every learning story. This gives me the opportunity to ask questions relating to interests at home. I have been amazed at the information gained from these answers. It has become obvious to me that more often parents of very active learners are likely to write the most about their children’s home life. These written answers are permanent reminders which I have found to be very effective for planning. Teachers should also remember to ask parents for evidence such as early development milestones recorded in Plunket Books, early drawings, and early interests. This will contribute to the complete assessment of the child’s giftedness.

Allen (2006) states the importance of the identification tool being used in conjunction with professional development. I believe that this has occurred at our kindergarten. Professional development and the use of identification tools together with team work have certainly contributed to the positive changes achieved in the kindergarten.

My research of Renzulli’s theory revealed that the “talent pool” in his opinion, consists of the top 15-20% of children (1998). As I calculated the numbers of how many children on average should be identified as being part of the “talent pool” at our kindergarten, I realised that our percentage was far less. If this figure is to be used as an estimate of gifted children in a learning environment, it is then obvious that the journey towards increasing the numbers of identified children in our kindergarten has only just begun. At least I have made a start with the teaching team. However my goal was and continues to be, to increase my success rate of finding these children. My search for these children led to my awareness that not all gifted children are obvious.

## **Examples of the Less Obvious Gifted Child**

The most important transition in my journey was discovering the fact that gifted children are not confined to academic domains such as mathematics and music. While I am not suggesting that Renzulli’s Three-Ring Concept of Giftedness is the complete answer for identification, his theory set me on a new path of searching for giftedness and talent that could be potentially developed in many different domains (Renzulli, 2003). I began looking beyond the “usual” gifted domains. I was excited as I set myself the challenge of discovering gifted children who were not so obvious. The following is an example of one of the children.

Maggie showed her teachers her love for flowers from her first day at kindergarten. Every day she has welcomed us with a flower clutched in her hand. Of course she proudly shows us her treasure and casually tells us the name of the flower. Discussions with her mother revealed that Maggie has always been drawn to flowers. She crawled to them as soon as she could. For her safety, her parents planted edible flowers in a special garden for their baby daughter. As Maggie has grown, she has developed a passion for gardening. She has vast knowledge of plants that is clearly more advanced than any of her peers.

Before developing my knowledge of gifted and talented children, I did not perceive Maggie as being gifted. As my knowledge increased, my suspicions of her giftedness increased. I began to understand that Maggie was not only showing us the flowers. She was sharing her knowledge too. I began to question her to establish the extent of her knowledge. At two years old she was able to tell me about nectar and honey bees as well as other snippets of knowledge. She was the only child in my experience with this depth of knowledge in this domain at such a young age.

The next challenge I had was to convince the adults in her world that she had gifted potential. Much thought led me to the decision to use Renzulli’s theory of task commitment, above average ability, and creativity as a tool to explain my suspicions of Maggie’s gifted potential (Renzulli, 2003). My explanation included her focus on plants that I believe demonstrates task commitment. I consider her knowledge about plants and her gardening skills as above average abilities for a three year old. Her creativity is evident at home in her own garden and at kindergarten in the way she uses flowers in as many activities as she can. I believe that if I had made the statement to

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the teaching team that Maggie has a gift in the domain of plants without the above explanation, I may not have been taken seriously.

My approach with Maggie's family was similar to the one I used for the teaching team. Once again the explanation was well received. Discussions with Maggie's family relating to her interest revealed that Maggie is from a family of talented gardeners who clearly value and support her development in this area. Her family was able to complete our understanding of how she developed her intense knowledge and passion, and this has resulted in the provision of extended learning in her domain. There is no doubt that at this point she is potentially gifted in the domain of plants, and I expect with understanding and nurturing she may develop into a gifted botanist or landscape architect.

Another example of less obvious giftedness is that of four year old Jessica. Jessica has always demonstrated intense emotions that have gradually developed into a strong sense of empathy towards her peers and her teachers. Her concern for others is always a priority, often at the expense of not continuing with the activity in which she is involved. Researching giftedness led me to a reading by Bevan-Brown in which she describes the Maori view of giftedness (2004). She explains that the gift of serving is the most desirable gift in the culture (Bevan-Brown, 2004). This reading changed my views of Jessica. I saw her in a different light. My strategies changed. Instead of discouraging her "dependency" on helping others, I provided opportunities for her to contribute to the group. I watched her progress into a child who has become a role model and a teacher for her peers with skills that are exceptional in her age group. I consider her to be a gifted child who for now serves her learning community. In the future she has the potential to serve her society in capacities such as ministering religion or teaching. I believe that this is only likely to occur if her giftedness is understood, acknowledged and nurtured.

The point of describing these examples is to show that it is possible for teachers to extend their search for giftedness beyond what is considered the academic domains. A year ago I would not have identified giftedness relating to plants or serving others. I have learnt to identify characteristics and behaviours in young children that are consistently there with great intensity in many different domains. The key is to have an open mind.

Reflecting on the possibilities of so many different domains, brings certain New Zealanders to mind. I challenge teachers to find children such as Peter Jackson and Sir Edmund Hilary both of whom proved their giftedness outside academic domains. Peter Jackson as a preschooler today may ask for the camera every day to take photographs and make videos. Sir Edmund Hilary as a preschooler today may be the risk taker constantly seeking new challenges on the playground. There are so many professions in this world. It makes sense that there are potentially gifted achievers in so many different domains relating to these professions.

## **Where to Next?**

Identification of gifted children is the start of inclusiveness for these children in education. Without this teachers are not providing appropriate education for all children in their early childhood education service. Once identification and programme implementation have successfully been introduced, the next challenge for teachers is to ensure that the progress continues. Ongoing professional development is essential for all teachers in order to continually progress in the provision of gifted education. As teacher confidence increases across the board in early childhood education services, I am hopeful that there will be many passionate teachers in New Zealand who will take on the challenge of being advocates for these children. If this does not happen, it is my fear that gifted young children will continue to be the "forgotten" children.

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## Conclusion

My journey in gifted education has demonstrated that teachers in the early childhood sector are generally not identifying giftedness and therefore are not implementing appropriate programmes. I believe that most teachers are unaware of the impact of not identifying gifted young children and the possible consequences for these children. With increased awareness, I am hopeful that teachers will make the necessary changes to improve gifted education in their early childhood education services. It is suggested that strategies to make these improvements should include professional development for teachers in the services. This is likely to impact on teacher knowledge in the identification process. Although many tools or methods were explored in my gifted education journey, the most successful gifted identification method was through narrative assessment. I therefore strongly recommend that teachers use this familiar method to identify gifted behaviours and dispositions of children. Once identification takes place programming specifically for gifted children is more likely to occur. I strongly believe that if teachers do not make the effort to improve their practice in the early childhood sector, gifted children will remain the forgotten children.

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