



Gifted Awareness Week 2020

Wellbeing - A no limits approach



New Zealand - June 2020



A Position Statement on SUPPORTING THE WELLBEING OF THE GIFTED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

**giftEDnz: The Professional Association for Gifted Education, New Zealand Association for Gifted Children
and New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education**

“This Government has a vision for an inclusive education system where every child feels a sense of belonging, is present, makes progress, where their wellbeing is safeguarded and promoted ...” ([The Learning Support Action Plan 2019-2025](#)). This focus on wellbeing, coupled with current long-term Ministry of Education initiatives have significant potential to support the wellbeing of gifted children and young people. All those involved in supporting gifted students, including the Ministry of Education, a broad range of specialist teachers and other professionals, community and whānau, can now leverage these opportunities and work interprofessionally to wrap around gifted students to support all aspects of wellbeing. It is our position that interprofessional collaboration, enabled by the Learning Support Action Plan, is an effective way to support the wellbeing of gifted children and young people.

Wellbeing is a concept that acknowledges the whole person, not just the academic, creative or intellectual needs of gifted children and young people. A comprehensive approach fundamentally acknowledges that giftedness is not restricted to the domain of classrooms and schools. Therefore, support for the unique social and emotional needs of gifted children and young people should also not be restricted to classrooms and schools but instead involve a broad range of educators, specialists, clinicians, whānau and community.

The wellbeing of gifted children and young people is often thought to be either negatively or positively affected by their giftedness. Neither is the case. Gifted wellbeing is influenced by the convergence of the person's individual characteristics of giftedness and 'fit' with learning contexts, as was found in an [extensive review of empirical studies](#) of the wellbeing of gifted individuals.

One way of conceptualising wellbeing is through the lens of Sir Mason Durie's [Whare Tapa Whā model](#). Here the four cornerstones of wellbeing are taha tinana (physical health), taha wairua (spiritual health), taha whānau (family and collective health) and taha hinengaro (mental health). This holistic approach to wellbeing is one that our organisations embrace for gifted children and their whānau.

Recently, significant progress has been made by the Ministry of Education to ensure the visibility of gifted learners and their needs. This progress has coincided with a wider educational and social focus on wellbeing. Recognising that gifted children have particular learning needs and therefore bringing them under the umbrella of Learning Support has been an important first step towards enhancing their wellbeing. [The Learning Support Action Plan](#) and in particular priority five (to better meet the learning needs of gifted children and young people through increased access to learning opportunities) signals a move from recognition to action. The creation of the role of Learning Support Coordinators (priority one) is another important step, as they will bring the priorities of the Learning Support Action Plan to life. An essential ethos embedded in this coordination role is to remove barriers to learning, engagement and wellbeing - a genuinely 'no limits' stance. A key task of [Learning Support Coordinators](#) is to build collaborative teams, within and across educational and community settings, to create a seamless and interprofessional approach to supporting the needs of gifted children and young people.



Gifted Awareness Week 2020

Wellbeing - A no limits approach



New Zealand - June 2020



An interprofessional approach to support would see a range of experts working collaboratively, in flexible ways, over sustained periods of time, across a range of settings. A broad view of who might be involved in teams for the support of gifted children and young people is essential and team members may include:

- parents and whānau;
- teachers;
- specialist teachers of gifted;
- Learning Support Coordinators;
- Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour;
- Ministry of Education facilitators;
- educational and clinical psychologists;
- occupational therapists;
- medical practitioners, including paediatricians, general practitioners and nurses;
- community members, including coaches and mentors;
- speech language therapists;
- physiotherapists;
- audiologists;
- optometrists;
- dietitians;
- counsellors;
- psychotherapists;
- social workers;
- and mental health workers.

Our organisations strongly support the notion of interprofessional teams working with gifted children and young people. Interprofessional approaches have greater potential to have a positive and sustainable impact on the wellbeing of our gifted children. An interprofessional team can carefully consider the unique life experiences of gifted individuals to ensure that strengths and challenges are identified and supported. The team can support the development of self-management and self-advocacy skills alongside personal strategies for enhancing wellbeing. These skills and strategies can be transferred across contexts and life stages more easily when an interprofessional team approach is taken.

Interprofessional practice requires gifted children and young people, their whānau and professionals to engage and work collaboratively to share decision-making and responsibilities ([Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui, 2020](#)). As New Zealand [stories](#) of interprofessional practice in health show, interprofessional teams of support can:

- develop shared goals for identifying and meeting the needs of gifted children and young people;
- build mutual respect and trust of one another's expertise;
- share roles and activities in open and flexible ways;
- build self-awareness of limitations and team awareness of strengths;
- provide multiple opportunities for discussion and dialogue;
- and develop positive and ongoing working relationships between team members.



Gifted Awareness Week 2020

Wellbeing - A no limits approach



New Zealand - June 2020



Our organisations are working to support professionals, whānau and the gifted themselves to build interprofessional networks for supporting gifted wellbeing. We also provide advocacy and advice to the Government. Our organisations now call on the Ministry of Education, along with all those who work to support the wellbeing of gifted children and young people, to ensure:

- that wellbeing remains a key priority for gifted children and young people within an inclusive education system in Aotearoa New Zealand;
- that gifted children and young people remain within the realm of Learning Support and their holistic needs are therefore considered in all ongoing Learning Support initiatives, such as Success for All and Inclusive Education;
- that priority five of the Learning Support Action Plan is well funded and supported at government and local levels;
- that Learning Support Coordinators, in the first and subsequent tranches, are well supported through time, resource and funding for their professional learning pathways so that their interprofessional practice in supporting gifted children is exemplary; and
- that all organisations and individuals working with gifted children are enabled to work interprofessionally.

These actions, alongside the ongoing work of our organisations, have significant potential to positively impact the wellbeing of our gifted children and young people through a collaborative interprofessional approach. *Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi* - with your basket and my basket the people will thrive. Our organisations endorse the sharing of our collective baskets with your baskets, in order for our gifted children to thrive.

A Position Statement supported by:

New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education

giftEDnz: *The Professional Association for Gifted Education*

New Zealand Association for Gifted Children

Gifted Awareness Week, 15-21 June 2020