

The development of this checklist

In 2019, the Nga Potiki a Tamapahore Trust and REACH Education won a Ministry of Education grant under the “Events and Opportunities for Gifted Learners” fund. A project was developed which, over a series of mostly marae-based workshops, brought together a number of gifted tamariki (children) to work on a range of projects reflecting both their cultural heritage and their individual passions while also learning more about accepted cultural practice or tikanga. In order to help schools select tamariki for this project, Mahaki and Mahaki’s “Profiles of Māori Gifted Learners” were provided to teachers. Reviewing this process in preparation for the second year of the project, the project coordinators were aware that the majority of teachers involved in the selection process were Pakeha and unfamiliar with Māori concepts of giftedness. It was decided to weave both Māori and Pakeha concepts into one document, hopefully each illuminating the other and helping teachers to make the necessary connections. Claire and Pita Mihaki were subsequently asked to review the resulting document, and their suggestions to clarify various points were gratefully received and included.

Identifying gifted Māori and Pakeha learners together

A checklist for all teachers

There is a very important difference between Māori and Pakeha or European ways of recognising giftedness.

The conventional European approach is to look for (a) manifested evidence of exceptional ability in some area, and/or (b) characteristic behaviours and responses research has shown to be associated with giftedness.

Māori also recognise such evidence, but place first importance on the personal *qualities* demonstrated by the individual.

There is wisdom in this approach. Put simply, it acknowledges the fact that a person’s qualities play a significant role in *how they demonstrate and use* the abilities they have – in whether they use their abilities for selfish or unselfish ends, for honest or dishonest purposes, in thoughtful and caring ways or without regard for the outcomes of their actions. Māori have an inherent expectation that abilities will be used to benefit others. Of course this does not imply that Pakeha ignore such values, but they are not normally the priority in the identification process.

Researchers like Jill Bevan-Brown, Clare and Pita Mihaaki and Angus MacFarlane, all themselves Māori, have put together lists of the kinds of qualities that Māori would expect to see in gifted Māori individuals. We have included such a list below.

That does not mean that we should overlook the evidence we may be more used to looking for. So we have also included a list of factors that may be more familiar to you. No gifted child will show *all* of these factors, but they will all clearly show a cluster of such attributes.

Remember as you work through these two lists to ask yourself how much opportunity your school programme gives children to display these various factors. That is a question that can be true for all gifted learners but may be especially – if unintentionally - true for gifted Māori in mainstream schools.

For more information, contact REACH Education, reacheducation@xtra.co.nz; www.giftedreach.org.nz

Qualities valued by Māori

Manaakitanga – [Mana (respect) ki (to) tangata (mankind)]. It includes a generosity of spirit and selflessness in nurturing the wellbeing of others. Mana is an attribute given to people, not self appointed e.g. people imbue you with mana (respect) because of your welcoming, caring, nurturing actions. It includes respecting the mana of others, having integrity, having a sense of occasion, welcoming and offering hospitality.

Whanaungatanga – is about belonging; this could be to an immediate family, to a marae, iwi, workplace or team. The importance is inclusion and a sense of reciprocity. We all share and take pride in the achievements of any member of our whanau, however we also share and carry the burden of shame for the transgressions of any member of our whanau. Thus it involves valuing and supporting loyalty and inclusiveness, being a role model and team player, connecting well with others, being strong in tautoko (recognising that one person's success is the success of the group).

Wairuatanga – is about the wai (waters) rua (two) that travel within us, creating balance. It involves spirituality, being grounded, calm, a sensitive and reflective thinker, a heart of humility which is open and giving, may appear absent-minded or introspective, but can be incredibly insightful on occasion (not necessarily the prescribed occasion). If you consider people in your life whom you turn to and enjoy being around, who are usually calm and balanced, they are often the ones who are in tune with their wairua: it is a great life skill.

Kaitiakitanga – guardianship of knowledge, the environment, and resources, having a very strong awareness of global issues and responsibilities, internally driven, passionate about these matters, recognises human welfare and care for environment are inextricably linked, may be an excellent storyteller, excellent memory, knowledge of and pride in whakapapa, iwi, and related geography. In addition, this role carries the responsibility of passing on these skills for future generations and for the welfare of the iwi or group. Knowledge is valued when it is shared and more can benefit.

Rangitiratanga – [Ranga (to weave) tira (a group of people)]. In Maori, the crucial element of leadership is to unite a group of people together towards a common cause. This is often achieved through humility and actions, rather than words. Again, it is the people who identify a Rangatira, through deeds as opposed to an appointed figurehead. This person has mana amongst peers, is a visionary and strategic thinker, opinions sought and valued, will stand up for beliefs and values, shows initiative, motivates others, sees beyond the obvious, often has mandate as group spokesperson.

Matauranga – intellectual ability, intrinsic motivation to learn, enquiring and seeks new knowledge, thinks critically and creatively, learns quickly, can transfer knowledge to new contexts, can analyse, problem find and problem solve, shares knowledge wisely and with discretion, ability in language skills, oral story-telling, pride in whakapapa, iwi, relevant geography. Involves a thirst for learning particularly at a deeper and more complex level of thinking. This is often evident during class, group or 1-1 discussions with students, rather than reliance on written work.

Tikanga – is about getting things right. Tika means to be correct, so adhering to tikanga is about showing the appropriate behaviours or protocols for varying occasions. The tikanga or kawa of a marae often has its roots in manaakitanga. Those who are gifted in this area often have an instinctive understanding of tikanga. They show appropriate respectful behaviour, knowledge of protocols, customs and rituals that demonstrate values and beliefs, demonstrates initiative and appropriate tikanga before, during and after events, guides others in appropriate tikanga, can transfer and adapt tikanga to a variety of situations and events.

Factors frequently included in European identification processes

[1] Exceptional performance – the student who demonstrates markedly well above average understanding and performance in one or more areas of learning, not necessarily always consistently.

BUT even highly gifted students do not always demonstrate this in their performance. So we also look at characteristic learning behaviour, either to help us find underachieving gifted students or to help us better understand those we have already identified. Thus:

[2] Associated characteristics – a gifted learner is likely to show a number (but certainly not all) of the following characteristics or attributes:

- Intellectual ability, intrinsic motivation to learn, enquiring and seeks new knowledge, thinks critically, learns quickly, can transfer knowledge to new contexts, can analyse, problem find and problem solve.
- Strong curiosity, a keen observer, persistent in questions, sustains interests, long attention span (if interested), demonstrates initiative.
- Creative thinker, produces innovative solutions, work often highly imaginative, may sustain invention over long periods.
- Intensity of feeling and response, passionate, sensitive to others' opinions.
- Morally sensitive, concerned with issues of justice, compassionate, judgement often mature for age, willing to question authority.
- Active and often witty sense of humour, sees irony in situations, appreciative of the absurd.
- Often prefers older or adult company, may seem introverted, may display many of the above characteristics only in trusted or safe company.
- A day-dreamer, seems to be in a world of her/his own much of the time; may, however, still produce the right answers.

But also gifted learners who have not previously been identified or have had negative experiences at school or amongst peers may show characteristics such as these:

- A nuisance in class, over-active, a show-off, the class clown.
- A loner; does not fit in with other students.
- Disruptive, uncooperative, resentful of authority.
- Anxious, seems excessively worried about her/his work, never a risk-taker.
- Work is generally fairly average, doesn't seem to try particularly hard, but every now and then produces flashes of brilliance that really surprise you.
- Written work is of average to poor quality, but orally is articulate, shows considerable imagination not expressed in written work.

- 1. Please use this information to develop an initial profile for each of the children you have identified. Record this in your gifted register (or ask your Learning Support Coordinator to do so).**
- 2. Now use this profile to decide on and plan appropriate provision for this child's needs as a gifted learner. Consult with whanau and with your Learning Support Coordinator for guidance in achieving this.**