

We're Māori – we're Pasifika – is this page for us?

This is a very understandable question. In its 2008 report on how well schools catered for gifted children, ERO discovered that most schools did not adequately take Māori or multicultural concepts into account. As a result, few Māori children were identified as gifted, and those who were, were taught and had their



performance assessed according to Pākeha ideas. Experience suggests that, sadly, that's still very often true today.

So the first question is, are Māori children really gifted as often and as much as Pākeha children? And the answer (of course) is a very robust YES! In fact, there's a lot of research which shows that giftedness is found in similar

proportions in *all* cultures.

So why aren't Māori children being identified as gifted as often as they should be? The answer seems to lie in the different approaches Pākeha and Māori have to how they think about giftedness and what they expect of their gifted young people. As a very general statement, Pākeha tend to focus more on measurable things – grades, awards, and high levels of performance in specific talent areas. But Māori have a different set of priorities and tend to look first at the *qualities* a person displays and at how these qualities influence how a person *uses* his or her talents. Very similar values affect Pasifika children too.

There's an even larger issue here. The notion of giftedness as something that is only concerned with measurable success is increasingly being questioned by researchers in various countries. What the world needs, they say, is a definition of giftedness which understands, respects and values the *qualities* that gifted individuals have, and which could help us to make our whole society a more caring and peaceful place.

In short, Pākeha may have much to learn from Māori and Pasifika. So, have confidence and belief in the taonga of your tamariki's giftedness and of his or her right to have that acknowledged and provided for in the schools of Aotearoa.

PS: If you click on the "Resources" page on this website, you will find a link to a number of articles about giftedness. Two of these deal especially with giftedness in Māori children.