

Focus:
Gifted and Talented

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During my Sabbatical I attended a seminar by Professor Miraca Gross (University of New South Wales) on 'Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted and Talented'. This Course was recommended to me by the George Parkyn Centre for the Gifted and Talented.

I visited a 2-teacher country school that is part of a cluster that accesses funding to meet the needs of their most gifted and talented students. The students chosen for this programme are selected according to a strict criteria set by the cluster schools.

I also visited another country school (6 teacher) who use their own funding to employ a trained teacher as their Gifted and talented co-ordinator. She runs a one day a week Withdrawal Programme for Gifted and Talented students. Each term the Programme covers a range of types of gifting and caters for a range of age groups. I observed the withdrawal of 3 different age ranges through the day. Students for this module were chosen for their gifting in art.

As the George Parkyn centre for Gifted and Talented in Auckland did not run the Course I'd planned to attend for teachers in their One day Schools, I was sent written information about their On Line One day School. I also accessed material regarding the Gifted and Talented from a number of Web sites and purchased suitable books for staff for Professional Development and Gifted and Talented programmes.

I took the opportunity also at the end of my Sabbatical to visit a large Christian School in Carrara in Queensland.

I have made 2 Resources available to the school. One is a folder for each teacher that contains a variety of information about Gifted and Talented. Relevant information can be added to the folder as sourced. The sections covered are as follows: What does the Ministry of Education say about Gifted and Talented?, Emmanuel Christian School procedure for gifted and talented, sample of cluster funding application and costings, some samples of what other schools are doing for Gifted and Talented students, For teachers-Catering for Gifted and talented students in the classroom, a sample of our school Discovery Class planning sheet, Information for Parents, George Parkyn Centre On Line Programme information and application and sample lesson, samples of tests, Emmanuel Christian School Resources, Places to visit, Other resources available to purchase, Professional Reading., Professional Development Options, Christian Statement on Gifted and Talented.

The 2nd resource is a 2 folder resource just recently put on-line by the University of New South Wales as a definitive Teacher Resource for Australian Teachers. One folder is for the Primary level and the other folder is for Early Childhood. (As this is an Australian Resource and the start age for students in Australia is different from the NZ system, this 2nd Resource is relevant to our New Entrant and Year 1 students). These modules were recommended by Professor Miraca Gross who is one of the authors of the material. This resource is able to be used by teachers for Professional Development. This is a very valuable resource for everyone involved in teaching Gifted and Talented students.

The role of RTLB in identifying Gifted and Talented students in a school: Although RTLB have access to testing to identify Gifted and Talented Students, at present they will only use this testing when a student is referred because of behaviour problems.

After looking at the options that could be available to us as a smaller school with limited funding to meet the needs of the Gifted and Talented Students in our school, I concluded that we need to listen to and assist parents by providing relevant information (such as encouraging them to join the NZ Association for Gifted Children which includes an excellent magazine called "Tall Poppies.")

Parents have the option of paying to have their children assessed by the George Parkyn Centre for Gifted and Talented and included in the Christchurch 1 day School set up recently at Riccarton Primary School or enrolling in the On-line One day School. These options are reasonably expensive.

There are holiday camps and activities also available for Gifted and talented students through different organisations in New Zealand and this information can be accessed on-line.

Because there could be 30% of students at one time in one class who could be Gifted and Talented in some area (maths, writing, oral language, art, drama, sports etc), our school needs to look at a wide picture of how to meet the needs of these students.

Accessing cluster funding with another group of schools and running a 1 day Withdrawal Programme could meet the needs of 1 or 2 students at each school who would probably fall into the 'highly academic' gifted category. When the cluster funding time-frame was finished, the schools involved would be expected to continue running and funding this programme.

In order to meet the needs of a wider group of Gifted and Talented students in our school it is important that teachers have on-going Professional Development in order to enhance understanding of the emotional and learning needs of Gifted and Talented Students. It is also important that staff are given clear direction about how to cater for Gifted and Talented students in day to day classroom programmes. Our planning formats need to be changed in order to reflect this.

It is important to include a "Thinking Skills " Session in the classroom programme. There are a number of Thinking Skills models. We have looked at 2 models in this

school year: The de Bono Plus/Minus and Interesting Model and De Bono's 6 Thinking Hats.

Withdrawing students for directed activities and lessons is a recommended strategy to help meet the needs of Gifted and Talented students as is grouping students across class levels for some activities in order to meet the social and intellectual needs these students have to be working with like-minded students.

My recommendations about Gifted and Talented students in Emmanuel Christian School are as follows:

- That our database of Gifted and talented Students is maintained.
- That all staff continue to receive ongoing Professional Development about gifted and Talented Students.
- That teachers cater for Gifted and Talented students in classroom programmes through differentiated lessons.
- That teacher unit planning sheets are modified to show this planning.
- That Thinking Skills are introduced through classroom teaching at appropriate levels with a different 'Thinking Skill' emphasis each term of next year. (This is to allow teachers and pupils to build up a Resource Bank of Thinking Skills.)
- That an hour a week (BoT funded) for the school year is allocated to a trained teacher (The Gifted and Talented co-ordinator).
- That for 3 terms this hour is used to withdraw smaller groups of students for specific activities across a number of areas of Gifting.
- That for one term each year in the Middle School area (Years 4-6) a Discovery Class is held for 1 hour to cater for the top 30% of the classes. (Suggest the 2 classes are divided into 3 groups. This class could possibly be run with some parental involvement.
- To involve Senior Classes in appropriate competitions or challenges.

Writing School Scheme for Scripture:

Most of my sabbatical was spent purchasing suitable materials and writing up a 3 year Scripture programme for Years 1-6 and a 2 Year Scripture programme for Years 7 and 8. As we have a scripture lesson 4 times a week as part of our Christian Living Programme, it has been hard to adapt other programmes as these are often written