



## Briefing Note: Update on the package for Gifted Learners

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for Education		
<b>Date:</b>	7 September 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Low
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1268366
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<b>Key Contact:</b>	Pauline Cleaver	<b>DDI:</b>	9(2)(a)
<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to note progress on the package for Gifted Learners and:

- **Agree** to proactively release this briefing, noting that Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982, including to protect the privacy of natural persons.

**Agree** / Disagree

### Summary

- Gifted Learners are Priority Five of the Learning Support Action Plan (LSAP). The current funding package for gifted learners is \$2.34 million per annum, which is focused primarily on direct service provision for gifted learners.
- The Ministry's focus in 2021 and 2022 for the Gifted Learner Package is to further develop the package to improve equity for gifted Māori and Pacific learners.
- Professional supports introduced through the LSAP are also supporting gifted education, and there is a Networks of Expertise.
- The Gifted Expert Group has advised on the current gifted work streams but would like gifted education to have a higher profile across the curriculum work programme.

- The refresh of The New Zealand Curriculum includes a focus on strengthening inclusive curriculum so that teaching and learning fits the needs of all learners, and is responsive to the uniqueness and diversity of all learners. This includes better meeting the needs of gifted learners within classroom programmes.

*Pauline*

Pauline Cleaver  
Associate Deputy Secretary  
**Early Learning and Student Achievement**

07/09/2021



Hon Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of Education**

12/09/2021

Proactively Released

## Background

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1. The Learning Support Action Plan (2019-2025) (LSAP) identified six strategic priorities to strengthen learning support. The LSAP aims to design support for a wide range of neurodiverse learners, including gifted learners. Priority 5 is for gifted learners 'Increasing access to supports for gifted children and young people.' Itemised provisions in the LSAP are:
  - a. the Ministry taking advice from a group of experts in gifted education,
  - b. support for Mindplus one day schools (or similar)
  - c. extend online learning and support identification of gifted learners.
2. The current package for gifted learners was designed for the 2019 budget announcement to double the funding specifically for gifted education to \$2.34 million per annum. This is now baseline funding within the Ministry of Education's annual budget. The components of the gifted package, progress and who provides them are outlined in annex one.
3. In 2020, the Ministry aligned gifted with neurodiversity with the rationale that giftedness is another form of neurodiversity. The term neurodiversity recognises the natural variability of how brains engage in learning, perceive information, and organise and communicate thinking. Providing flexible supports for neurodiverse learners is Priority 4 of the LSAP. The focus of this priority is on building the understanding and confidence of early learning services, ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura to teach and respond to neurodiversity in adaptive ways based on learners' strengths and needs.
4. You have been updated on the activity underway to support neurodiverse learners and recent literature reviews - *Beasley Institute research on Neurodiversity* (METIS 1247377) and *Understanding Neurodiversity from a Te Ao Māori Perspective* (METIS 1263806).

## Key insights from implementation of the gifted package

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5. The previous Associate Minister for Education had requested a focus primarily on direct service provision for gifted learners. Most of these are delivered outside of the regular learning environment to give learners additional challenges of their own choosing. Most students, however, do learn about what is available to them from their teachers.
6. The gifted package gives the Ministry the benefit of testing a range of evidence-based options for gifted learners in the New Zealand environment with the ability to adapt in real time. The evaluation will provide information on the appeal and impact for learners, value of investment so far and guidance for next steps.
7. As we implement the package, we are learning more about what is engaging for gifted learners and who we are not reaching. This aligns with advice we are given from the Gifted Expert Group. We know from the data from Mindplus, the Events and Opportunities projects and the Awards that:
  - a. teachers are the most common source of information for learners about opportunities offered through the package
  - b. we are not reaching Māori and Pacific learners as we had hoped. Feedback from providers suggest this is largely due to schools not recognising these learners as gifted and not directing them to Mindplus One day School, Events Opportunities projects and the Awards

- c. Māori and Pacific learners are responding more to in-school group activities, particularly when they are targeted to them. Events and Opportunities providers report that targeted group activities require schools to think differently about who they are referring for extension activities
  - d. group online participation following COVID has become more popular than in-person workshops
  - e. there is still a common belief that giftedness only means academic or leadership success. This impacts on who is accessing the package.
8. An evaluation of the current gifted package will commence in 2022. This will provide information on how it is working and not working for gifted learners and what improvements we can make.
  9. In the meantime, the Ministry is making continuous improvements to delivery, in particular to better engage with Māori and Pacific learners. For example, the criteria for the Awards for Gifted Learners were amended for the current round to reflect the preference Māori learners have shown for group activities rather than individual initiatives.

### Professional supports for gifted education as part of the LSAP

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10. Priority 1 of the LSAP was the introduction of Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs). The Gifted Expert Group sees the LSCs as being key to gifted learners accessing the supports and learning challenges they need. This role was introduced into schools in January 2020. LSCs are an in-school role that works to build the learning support capability of teachers and kaiako and to identify and plan for the learning support needs of the children and young people in the school or kura. The LSC role works with students covering a wide range of learning support needs. The LSC role description specifically references working with gifted practitioners to support gifted learners.
11. In February 2020 three induction forums were held in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch for recently appointed LSCs as well as a principal from each cluster. One of the workshops in these forums focussed on neurodiverse and gifted learners.
12. The Ministry of Education has also produced a resource: Learning Support Coordinators: A guide to the role (The Guide). The Guide positions gifted learners clearly within scope of the role of the LSC and includes information for LSCs on providing support for neurodiverse learners and those who are gifted.
13. In 2020, Te Whai Toi Tangata: Institute of Professional Learning, University of Waikato, provided a series of workshops on gifted learners in the Bay of Plenty aimed at LSCs and other specialist educators.
14. The Ministry of Education-funded Learning Support Network (LSN) has many resources to support gifted learners, which are available for LSCs and SENCOs to access. The network has produced a webinar and a learning module on gifted learners, which are available to all members (currently 490 LSCs or 79% of all LSCs and 946 SENCOs). It is an area the LSN is continuing to develop.
15. In addition to Learning Support coordinators, the Ministry supports approximately 350 teachers each year to undertake the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching through the Learning Support study awards. These teachers are mostly from early learning services and schools. We have contracted Massey University to provide a new post-graduate qualification, which has started this year, with strengthened core content on autism and neurodiversity across all endorsements. There is also a specialist endorsement for gifted education.

## The Gifted Expert Group

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16. The Ministry's Gifted Expert Group is an advisory role established as part of the LSAP. It comprises 12 educators who have been actively advocating for gifted learners in their careers. They are listed in annex two.
17. Members of the Gifted Expert Group have advised on the implementation of the current gifted package through small group work:
  - a. participating in development of criteria for Awards and advising on improvements
  - b. participating on application evaluation panels for Awards for Learners and Teachers
  - c. providing advice on the development of the Early Learning project and participating in a review of resources developed in that project
  - d. providing online information sessions for Events and Opportunities providers
  - e. participating in initial discussions on an approach for identifying gifted learners.
18. The Gifted Expert Group members add value and benefit to the gifted package because of their strong research and education backgrounds. Some group members are currently working in schools and can provide practical advice on how components of the gifted package can interface with schools.
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20. You agreed to open the Gifted TRCC conference in October. The Gifted Expert Group requested you be invited to a meeting the Ministry is scheduling with them before that conference. A meeting was not possible within this timeframe, but your office has indicated you will be able to meet with the group later in the year. In the meantime, the conference has been cancelled due to COVID alert levels.
21. The Gifted Expert Group is concerned that gifted education does not have a high profile in the current Ministry development for curriculum, learner supports and PLD and has offered more input. While not on the expert group, Jo Brunskill (President of the Association for Gifted Children) is a member of the Curriculum Voices Group informing the curriculum work programme.

## Wider New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) work programme

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22. The refresh of The New Zealand Curriculum includes a shift to a more bicultural and inclusive framework that weaves through all parts of the curriculum. This will provide a more explicit narrative around inclusive curriculum and the need for teaching and learning to fit the needs of all learners, so that curriculum is responsive to the uniqueness and diversity of all learners.
23. The new consistent approach to learning areas that you recently agreed to [METIS 1266499 refers] will make it easier for teachers to design and deliver learning experiences and effective practices that support learning progress of every ākonga. It will be easier to notice the continuity of learning and progress over time across the curriculum, including how learning from each learning area contributes to the growth of the whole child.

24. The new approach to learning areas includes explicitly weaving in Key Competencies, numeracy, literacy and mātauranga Māori into the 'Understand, Know, Do model which is framing knowledges and the big conceptual ideas. 'Progress outcomes' will enable a view of the continuity of learning and progress over time, making explicit the increasing breadth and depth of learning.
25. As we develop the record of learning [METIS 1253955 refers], one of the aims is to ensure it provides holistic and strengths-based records of learning for all learners that recognise and value unique and diverse learner identities, reflect aspirations, celebrate achievements, and track progress and needs across a range of knowledge, skills and capabilities.
26. The pedagogical practice shift for teachers to deliver on an inclusive curriculum is about how to plan for all learners in classroom from the outset, while being responsive to individual needs and working out what is needed to support the learner to be successful within the context of the curriculum and classroom. This includes better meeting the needs of neurodivergent and gifted learners within classroom programmes.
27. Changes will be supported by professional learning and development, and supports to strengthen teacher capability around inclusive curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. As we strengthen professional learning and resources during the course of the refresh we will be incorporating inclusive practices and accessible design as standard practice.
28. Alongside weaving progress in the 'Managing Self' and 'Relating to others' Key Competencies as part of the NZC refresh, we are also improving the resources available to support a stronger focus on Social Emotional Learning in local curriculum. This builds on earlier work developing and trialling tools which are deliberately designed to meet the needs of all learners, including those who are gifted or neurodivergent [METIS 1251127 refers].
29. In the strategies for literacy, maths, te reo matatini and pāngarau [METIS 1266696 refers] we are looking at how we can better support teachers to design for diversity and adapt practices for different needs, as well as providing timely access to targeted and individualised support in response to ākonga needs. This includes for students with dyscalculia and dyslexia, building on the dyslexia kete of resources launched in 2020.
30. We know that mental health is more likely to be an issue for disabled people, including those who are neurodivergent, and have worked to ensure that their needs are included and visible in the draft mental health education guide [METIS 1256081 refers].

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## Next Steps

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34. The plan for the gifted package for 2022/2023 includes:
- a. increasing engagement with Māori and Pacific gifted learners by making the package and promotion more relevant and appealing to them and their whānau.
  - b. developing an approach for identifying gifted learners
  - c. commencing evaluation of the package of approaches to improve outcomes for gifted learners.
35. If you wish to, the Ministry will work with your office to arrange a meeting for you with the Gifted Expert Group later in the year.

## Proactive Release

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36. It is intended that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982, including to protect the privacy of natural persons.

## Annexes

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- Annex one: Gifted package components and progress to date  
Annex two: Membership of Gifted Expert Group

## Annex one: Gifted package components and progress to date

<b>Component</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>Next steps</b>
Awards for Gifted Learners	<p>Round Six is currently open and closes on 30 September. To date 628 awards have been made over four rounds since April 2019.</p> <p>The Awards for Gifted Learners are monetary grants that support learners who are seeking challenge and extension outside of their regular classroom learning. They can apply as individuals or as groups. Past awards have supported learners with art supplies and lessons, leadership development, cultural development, science camps, STEM fees, an environment club, chess tournaments, sports tournaments, coaching, and music, dancing and theatrical performances.</p> <p>We continue to focus on making the awards more appealing to Māori and Pacific learners through increasing award funding for groups and focused promotion.</p>	Review Round Six results to ascertain if adaptations to award structure and promotion make them more accessible for Maori and Pacific.
Awards for Teachers of Gifted Learners	<p>Round Five opens 1 October and closes 1 November.</p> <p>To date 39 Awards have been funded. The first round had 23 funded applications; however, the following rounds have had few applications. Feedback indicates this is a result of COVID disruption.</p> <p>The Awards for Teachers of Gifted Learners are monetary grants that support access to learning opportunities to increase their skills for supporting gifted learners. Teachers can apply as individuals or as groups. The funding is flexible to enable learning opportunities that are more accessible for busy classroom teachers, fitting in with their timetables and locations.</p>	Given the low uptake, we will review the need for this approach after Round Five.



Component	Progress to date	Next steps
The Teachers Awards for the Massey University Post Graduate Diploma of Teaching: Gifted Endorsement	The inaugural Awards were made in October 2020 and the course commenced in 2021. Five new teachers will come online each year for the first year of the two-year course, meaning there will be ten teachers receiving it at any given time from 2022 onwards.	Seek feedback from current award recipients of the impact of support.
Events and Opportunities	<p>These are community-based projects that offer learners the opportunity for challenge and extension outside of the classroom in a group environment. Providers deliver project-based learning to enable gifted learners to connect and collaborate with each other in a range of forums and settings – in person or online. These often take a practical workshop and competition format.</p> <p>There are currently nine projects ranging from Auckland to Dunedin. This includes one project in Māori medium, one marae-based project and one Pacific Island project. Several of the projects engage directly with iwi about provision for Māori learners. All projects are required to have strategies for engaging Māori and Pacific learners. This has resulted in growing Māori and Pacific participation.</p>	<p>We continue to encourage better provision for Māori and Pacific learners. Most of the providers are responding to this challenge but some need to expand their strategies.</p> <p>We will continue facilitating group learning conversations with the providers on different aspects of supporting gifted learners. This began in COVID lockdown. New working partnerships have resulted from the conversations.</p>
Events and Opportunities Māori-medium settings	There are opportunities for extension outside kura for ākonga. A delivery plan is being developed.	Finalising a plan that will guide procurement and implementation.

Component	Progress to date	Next steps
The Early Learning project	<p>This project provides coaching and resources for teachers in early learning centres in how to best identify and respond to young gifted learners. This involves in-person and online workshops, depending on centre availability and preferences. COVID restrictions meant there was more online participation than expected.</p> <p>The original project was developed by the New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education (NZCGE). The second phase is being delivered by CORE with NZCGE participating on the advisory group.</p>	<p>The increased emphasis on responding better for Māori and Pacific learners, whānau and teachers is a key feature of the new contract.</p> <p>Establish an advisory group to review the resources developed. Membership includes a Gifted Expert Group representative.</p>
Identification and Training	<p>This work involves developing an approach for schools, teachers and whānau to identify gifted learners. Work commenced in November 2020 with the Expert Advisory Group. The group was extended to include Māori and Pacific Island members. We plan to complete this work by June 2022.</p> <p>9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>Aligning the approach with the Ministry's strategic developments for progress tools.</p> <p>Advice from expert group on content will guide procurement of an identification approach from a suitable provider.</p>
Evaluation	<p>The evaluation of the package will commence in 2021. The approach will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• iterative evaluation of the content, processes, and impact of the individual components</li> <li>• summative evaluation of the content, processes, and impact of the individual components as well as the package as a whole and how the different parts work together.</li> </ul>	<p>Preparing to procure an evaluator.</p>

## Annex two: Membership of Composition of Gifted Expert Group

*As at August 2021*

Madelaine Armstrong Wilcox – Programme Manager New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education

Rosemary Cathcart – Director REACH Education

Andi Delaune - Programme Coordinator Graduate Diploma of Teaching and Learning, Early Childhood, University of Canterbury

Aiono Manu Faaea-Semeatu – Senior Pasifika Manager, Manukau Institute of Technology

Ingrid Frengley-Viapuna – HOD English, Patea Area School

Professor Tracy Riley – Dean of Research, Massey University

Emma Scobie-Jennings – Teacher in Charge Digital Technologies/Gifted and Talented Education Co-ordinator, Bream Bay College

Brooke Trenwith – Education consultant at Potential to Perform – PLD provider

Deb Walker - NZCGE project lead for NEX, Specialist Teaching Post-graduate course Massey University

Vanessa White – Waikato University

Elizabeth Wilson - Director, Gifted and Talented, Shirley Boys High School