

15 June 2015

Dear Mr Hughes,

On behalf of New Zealand's 40,000 gifted and talented students, their families, and the professionals who work with them in our schools and centres, we are seeking the answers to some pertinent questions regarding the placement and priority of gifted education.

June 15th – 21st is Gifted Awareness Week, a week to both celebrate the diverse population that are our gifted and talented young people and raise awareness of their needs. Many of their special needs are still not being met in schools and centres throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

We believe that in order for New Zealand to achieve the aim of a fully inclusive education system in which "(all) students' identities, languages, abilities and talents are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 9), there is still much to be done to recognise, cater for and **include** the special needs of gifted and talented students.

We attach to this letter a **Position Statement on Gifted Students in the Inclusive Education System** on behalf of our three organisations. We would like to request a meeting with you to discuss our position that gifted learners must be explicitly recognised and equitably supported in inclusive education in Aotearoa New Zealand. We would like to share our vision for how this may be achieved in our tertiary institutions, schools and centres.

Further, we would appreciate a response to the following questions about future plans for gifted education within the Ministry:

1. How do you see gifted and talented students' needs being identified and met within the Ministry's long term planning?
2. Are gifted and talented students included in the focus on special and inclusive education? If not, can you please provide an explanation for their exclusion?
3. In regard to the contestable funding for professional learning and development in gifted and talented education (that has been rolled over for the 2014 - 2015 year), what is the evidence of specific learner outcomes that have been achieved from this funding to date? Will these outcomes be shared with the wider gifted and talented community? When and how might we expect to be informed of the **outcomes** of the professional development programme which has been operating since 2012?
4. How much funding was allocated for gifted and talented education for 2016, and what is the process for its expenditure?

5. What is the status of the Advisory Group to the Ministry on Gifted and Talented Education that has not met since 2013 – nor been officially disbanded or acknowledged for their service to the Ministry of Education?

Thank you for your prompt consideration of these matters and we look forward to further dialogue with you regarding the specific needs of our gifted and talented children in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Yours faithfully,

Louise Tapper – Chair, giftEDnz, The Professional Association for Gifted Education

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