

Summary of Meeting with the Ministry of Education Representatives – August 25th 2015

Present:

Pauline Barnes - Group Manager Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ministry of Education

Marie Nordstrand – Ministry of Education

Louise Tapper – Chair, giftEDnz

Deb Walker – CEO, New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education

Andrew Patterson – President, NZAGC

Background:

The three organisations had provided the Ministry representatives with a list of questions (below), which were originally set out in our letter to Peter Hughes, the Secretary of Education (15/6/2015). The meeting was primarily structured around the responses to these questions.

- 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?**
- 6. Who has responsibility for gifted learners within the Ministry of Education?**

We also sent the Ministry our joint Position Statement on *Gifted Students in the Inclusive Education System* and the statements below, representing the shared vision that the three organisations have for the future of gifted and talented education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

- That gifted and talented learners are recognised as learners with special educational needs.
- That all schools and centres have access to professional learning and development in gifted and talented education, including specialist resource teachers.

- That all schools and centres have access to direct funding for resources for gifted and talented students, to support identification and provision and review.
- That all teacher education institutions provide training in gifted education for pre service teachers.
- That the Ministry leads further research into how to support evidence-based effective practice for gifted and talented learners in our schools and centres.

Main Points from the Meeting.

1. There was no specific answer given as to where gifted education fits within the Ministry's future plans. Pauline talked about the government's education plans as a whole and the major investment happening in education. Gifted education could fit within IES or Communities of Schools and through the Teacher-led Innovation funds, but she was not able to provide specifics.
2. The answer to Question 2 was that schools are expected to cater for all children under the inclusive philosophy. We pointed out that this was not actually happening, in practice, across the whole range of schools and centres in New Zealand and that many gifted learners are not being catered for appropriately. We told them of anecdotal parents' stories, of teachers' stories and pointed to the lack of up to date evidence-based research about what was actually happening in terms of real inclusive practice for gifted learners currently in our schools and centres, nationally. We advocated for a replication of the Riley et al report of 2004 and/or another national focus on gifted and talented education from ERO in their reviews. The last national focus report from ERO was in 2008. Pauline was open to the idea of another national research report on what is happening in our schools and centres. She sees this as being something that could be achievable. She also elected to talk to the Education Review Office about including gifted and talented as a focus area.
3. In regard to the contestable funding it is hard to tell that there is any actual amount of funding put aside specifically for gifted. Pauline was not able to talk of actual amounts. The work in the gifted area seems to sit under the PLD umbrella – a major focus for the Ministry. Everything seems to be submerged into the new ideas about PLD that the Ministry is working on and this process is about 6 months behind. Pauline said that once this PLD review is sorted they can come back to what will be done for gifted. In terms of sharing outcomes from current PLD contracts they are happy to do this. Marie suggested that they could make a summary of Milestone reports, or make up a presentation for sharing outcomes, or ask PLD leaders to present the outcomes etc. We pushed hard for this to be done as we emphasised the need for dissemination with the wider gifted community so that others can get some benefit from where the funding went. We also brought up the continued need for compulsory training in gifted education at the pre-service level in Colleges of Education. Pauline said she would bring this up in her work with 'induction' - teacher training. We think the message was that the Ministry is currently working on consulting with institutions or something, around what is in the curriculums being taught in teacher training courses.

4. In the meantime, the contracts from 2014-2015, for the Te Toi Tupu led cluster in the North Island and the UC Education Plus led cluster in the South Island, are being rolled over into 2106.
5. It is unlikely that the Advisory Group, in the form that it was previously, will be reinstated. The message was that this was the idea of a “previous Minister” and that there needs to be a specific focus for such a group before it can be seen as necessary. However, Pauline is happy to meet with the chairs of our three organisations regularly, and possibly other “stakeholders”, as representatives of the wider gifted community. The next meeting was suggested for 6 weeks’ time in order to make sure that there was some follow up on the actions that were decided upon from this one.
6. The person with responsibility for gifted education at the Ministry is Pauline Barnes and she is the person to contact. We were encouraged to do so at any time.

Actions:

- 1) The three chairs will meet again with Pauline and Ministry reps in 6 weeks (week of October 5th).
- 2) Pauline will talk to ERO about gifted education as a focus for their future reviews.
- 3) Pauline will mention the need for teacher training in gifted education in induction consultations.
- 4) Pauline will look at the idea of funding a research project into the approaches and effectiveness of gifted education in schools and centres – possibly replicating the 2004 report, or at least with the aim of gathering some data about what teachers, parents/whanau and students say is happening.
- 5) Marie will develop a summary of the outcomes from the current PLD contracts for us to share around the gifted community, prior to the release of the PLD reports. The Ministry will work with the organisations on further communications around PLD, to make learnings/results from PLD more visible.
- 6) Progress the idea of having a gifted and talented subject association stakeholder meeting with the Ministry, possibly every 6 months.

Louise Tapper

September 2015