

giftEDnz Communications Survey

An analysis of findings

20 July 2015

"I believe giftEDnz is uniquely placed to lift standards in gifted education in this country and to play a leading role in achieving this. I hope the new board will reflect on possibilities for this"

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Introduction

The following analysis is based on data gathered through the 2015 giftEDnz e-communications survey. These results are based on a sample size of twenty one respondents.

Explored through this survey are current and potential forms of e-communications which include; emails, giftEDnewz, the giftEDnz website and social media platforms, such as the TKI mailing list and Facebook. giftEDnz as a community of practice, is also examined, as is the role of communications within this.

Participants were invited to share about their professional interests and expertise, and encouraged to identify where they would like to further their learning. Views were also sought around potential ways giftEDnz might further meet the needs of its members.

This analysis provides a summary of findings that can be drawn upon when considering how giftEDnz may use e-communications to better meet its goals.

Keeping Up-to-date with giftEDnz News and Activities

General email and giftEDnewz were identified as the most highly valued means of keeping up to date with activities and resources and also general communication. It was noted however, that email communications are not always an effective tool if workloads are high and priorities lay in different areas as emails may remain unopened, or simply be discarded. Brevity of information was considered important by some due to time constraints of members impacting on time spent engaging in any communications being sent out. However, in other instances, it was expressed that more in-depth material is sought. The website also holds value for members. However, the need to ensure this is kept up-to-date with current information impacts on how useful this is.

Board response: General email and giftEDnewz will remain as the main methods of communication. The board will endeavour to keep the website maintained and fresh, with links to relevant, new and updated website content being included in giftEDnewz.

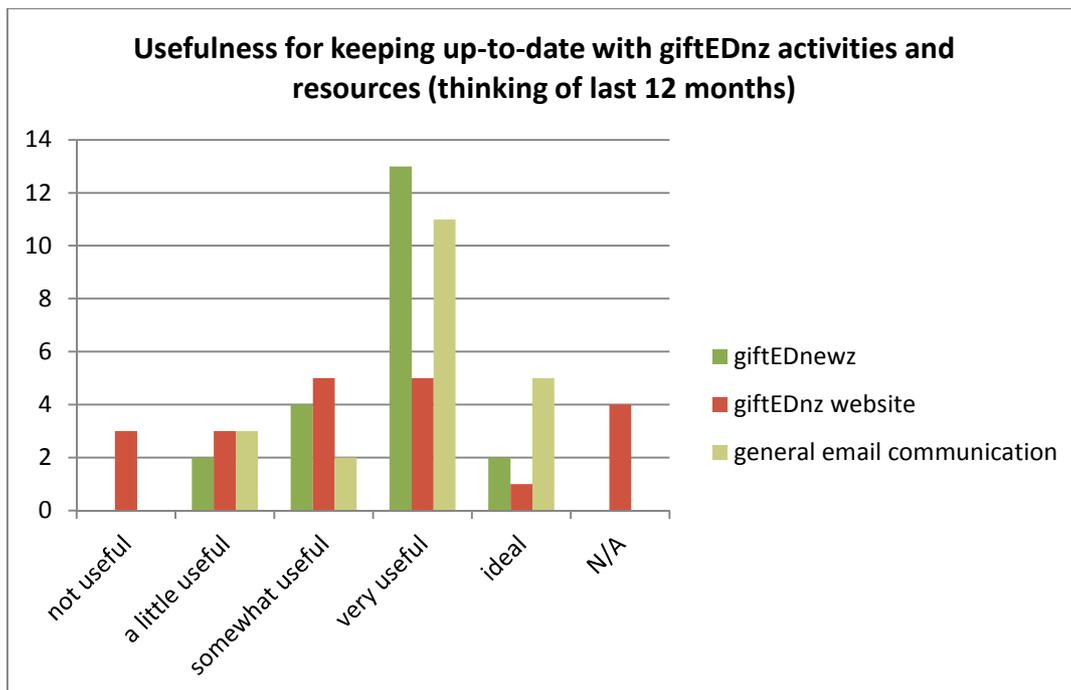


Figure 1: Members express the most value in giftEDnewz and general email communication to date

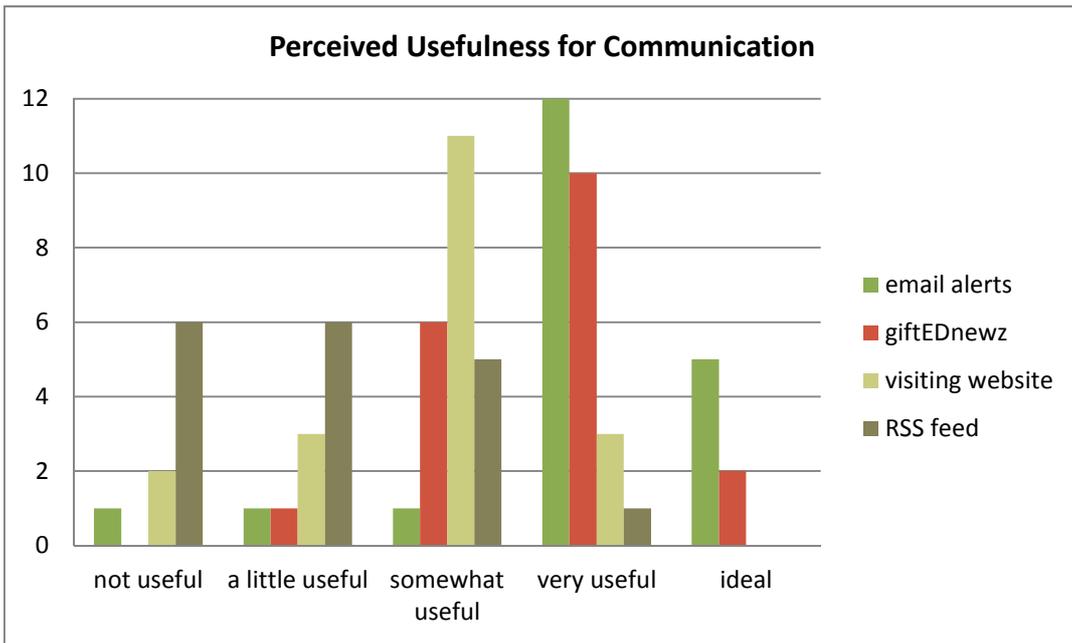


Figure 2: Members perceive email alerts and giftEDnewz to be the most effective tools for communication, with the website being considered useful

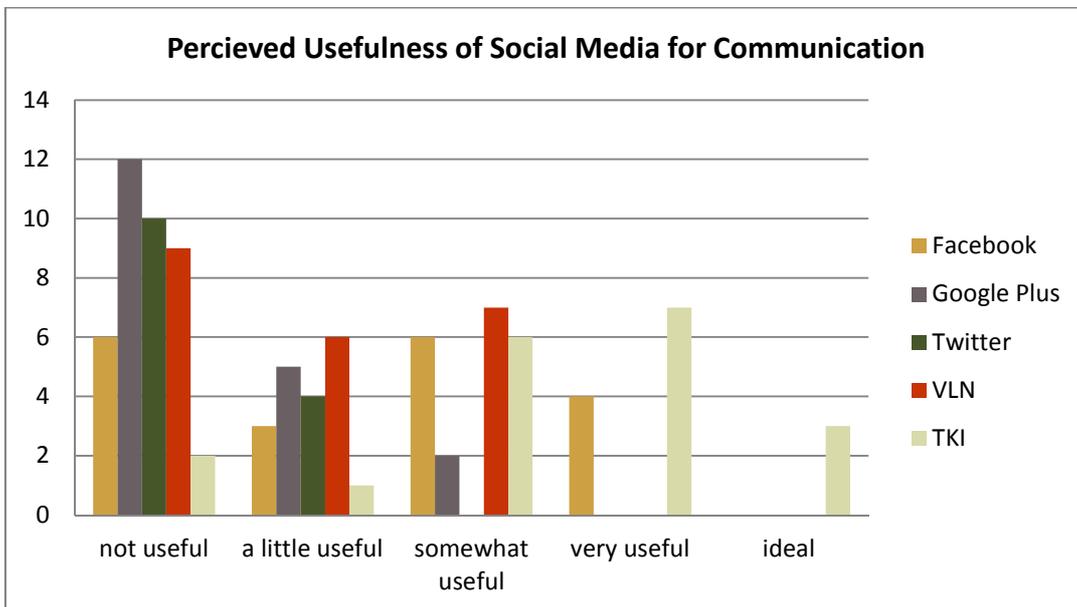


Figure 3: TKI was the most preferred social media tool for communication, with Facebook being the 2nd most preferred.

The TKI mailing list was identified as the most preferred social media tool for communication, with interest also shown in the use of Facebook as a means to connect, and a low level interest in the Virtual Learning Network.

Board response: In addition to the giftEDnz mailing list and giftEDnewz, the TKI gifted mailing list will be also be used as a mechanism for communication (as appropriate and fitting within the guidelines of this forum). The Board will further explore the possibility of having a Facebook account.

giftEDnz Community of Practice

The main benefits of the giftEDnz community of practice are seen as:

- being able to keep up-to-date and in-touch with news, current thinking, research and practice in gifted education
 - awareness of what is happening nationally
- knowing what Professional Learning opportunities are available, particularly at a local level
- helpful with evidence-based planning and school-wide professional development
- keeping gifted education in the forefront of one's mind
- reducing isolation in practice
 - in solitary roles
 - inclusion of rural practitioners who may otherwise miss out

Communication is central to the feeling of belonging to the giftEDnz community. For members to feel they can engage, it has been highlighted that communication needs to be two-way, whether asynchronous or synchronous. There are members who are keen to contribute to the giftEDnz community of practice in different capacities.

Barriers to feeling a part of the giftEDnz community of practice included communications all being through email, limited feedback about the results of giftEDnz groups and a lack of activities in members' areas. Face-to-face engagement was an option that was seen as useful, and one which some felt could overcome the time barriers and other pressing priorities present in daily work life.

Ensuring giftEDnz finds a niche "where it is uniquely placed to initiate or implement" and is not simply replicating what other organisations are already doing, such as through the TKI list serv, was highlighted as important, for example the use of Writing Retreats. The TKI mailing list and Mary's Gifted Contacts on Facebook were highlighted as valuable with acknowledgement of limitations around these as a means for sharing organisational information and resources.

Sustainability of having another closed Facebook group was questioned. However, counter to this, there was acknowledgement of the success of the recently established closed Emerging Researchers Facebook group, highlighting that additional closed groups may be a viable option. In addition, there was consideration around the fact that currently operating social media groups are not necessarily offering content which is relevant to New Zealand practitioners, as the users and the content shared are not always specific to the New Zealand educational context.

"I think giftEDnz has an important place in that it is not beholden to the MOE - which is where the TKI resource falls down. giftEDnz can and should be the critical eye on gifted education in NZ" – survey participant

Board Response: giftEDnz would like to continue to develop the organisation in ways that help members to feel a part of the community of practice. giftEDnz welcomes and encourages contributions from members for the giftEDnewz, and will be organising events for people to meet and access professional learning, such as the 2016 AGM event and the giftEDnz Road Show being planned for 2017. The Board will look into whether the use of Facebook might also be useful for the purposes of strengthening the organisation's sense of being a community of practice. There will be further consideration around what other mechanisms might be used for developing increased dialogue among the organisation's members. If you have a locally driven giftEDnz activities happening in your area, or would like to get one off the ground, please let us know so we can support you by sharing about it with other members.

Professional Interests

Members' areas of interest

The following areas of professional interest were identified:

- Professional development in gifted education
- Research
- Educational provisions
 - Curriculum design and development,
 - including subject or skill specific areas - mathematics, science, history and leadership were identified specifically
 - Programme development
 - Development of teaching strategies
 - Differentiation
 - Social and emotional needs
- Gifted education at different levels
 - Early childhood
 - Provisions for students in secondary school
 - tertiary education
- Specific gifted groups
 - Gifted Māori
 - Gifted girls
 - Gifted Pasifika learners
 - Disadvantaged and underserved individuals e.g., low SES across the life-span
 - Withdrawal one day programme for gifted learners
- Collaborative Practice
 - Working with teachers and schools
 - Working with parents and whānau
 - Pre-teacher training
 - Professional learning leading to sustainable change

Further Professional Learning of Interest

The following areas of interest were highlighted:

- Quality assurance of teaching practice
- Professional Learning and Development and up-skilling staff - dispelling myths and increasing understanding
- Research, especially New Zealand based
- Ensuring teaching is based on New Zealand research and evidence
- New Zealand events and activities
- Conferences - including mainstream opportunities to share research, practice and ideas
- Strategies for working with twice-exceptional children
- Acceleration and the evidence base for its use, including within the NCEA framework
- Provisions in the Modern Learning Environment
- Creativity
- Personalising learning
- Funding opportunities
- School-tertiary partnerships
- How to strengthen and increase partnerships between researchers and practitioners
- Strengthening supports for underachieving gifted girls

Board Response: giftEDnz encourages you to share your knowledge and expertise with others by contributing to giftEDnewz, and sharing at giftEDnz events, either those organised at a local level by members or national events organised by the Board in collaboration with members. The interests and areas of practice of members will be used to help guide the information and resources that giftEDnz develops and shares.

How giftEDnz can help to further serve members

“I see giftEDnz as a hub where people can gather (virtually as well as in person at various events) to get information, liaise with likeminded people, connect and network in order to present a more consolidated and powerful presence, collaborate and break down 'barriers' between practitioners and researchers etc., and learn from each other” – survey participant

Ongoing communication and liaison were highlighted as crucial to being able to serve members well in the future. Through this, members feel they are able to keep up-to-date with current thinking and practice, professional development opportunities and new resources that are available. A comment was made that schools don't get many academic journals, especially with a focus on gifted education. The value in having access to relevant new research and publications was a prominent theme.

Being able to engage with other members in professional areas of interest was also identified as being important. Member networking events was an idea that was suggested, with the idea being put forward, to develop Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to connect members who share professional interests. Further to this, it was expressed that value is held in being able to share, mentor and support other educators to help in the development of understanding and skills, as well as working toward the sustainability of giftEDnz as an organisation and the field of gifted education in general.

Board Response: The Board will further explore other avenues to better serve giftEDnz members, such as the potential for the establishment of additional Special Interest Groups and how to support educators to be able to more readily access relevant up-to-date information and resources pertaining to evidence based practice.

Summary

Some strong trends are apparent through the survey responses. Email and giftEDnewz are seen as preferred methods of communication, with the website being a valuable resource when maintained and kept up-to-date. The TKI listserv was the most popular form of social media however poses some limitations around how much and what information may be posted through this forum, thus Facebook may be an additional avenue worth exploring given some interest has been shown in this.

Communication was seen to be the key to giftEDnz providing the basis of a member-only community of practice, but the communication needs to be more than just Board to members, with the creation of opportunities for members to network and share, being sought. This ties in strongly with the idea that giftEDnz could further develop its communication in a way which nurtures a community of practice, promoting enhanced connectivity, belonging and professional learning that is relevant to practitioners. Through a more active and participatory community, members can share their expertise, ask questions and seek support.

giftEDnz would like to thank all those members who contributed their perspectives through this survey. This has provided valuable information on which the Board will reflect further, as giftEDnz continues to plan and move forward. The Board invites on-going communication in relation to its activities, and welcomes all suggestions and feedback which helps to promote enhanced practice in alignment with the organisation's strategic plan and goals.